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The Nature of War

:: :: —*And its Causes* :: ::

*By H. Fielding Hall, Author of "The
Soul of a People," "The Way of Peace," etc.* :: ::



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CHAPTER I

THE INEVITABILITY OF WAR

THE NATURE OF WAR AND ITS CAUSES

IN every great trial that a man, a nation, or a civilization, passes through, it makes two resolves, or rather it cherishes two hopes, to help it through the trouble, the first that it will win through at all costs, and the second that when peace has returned it will so arrange the future that this particular trouble can never occur again. And of these two hopes, the first, though the most immediate, is perhaps the lesser. For in a great and stubborn war, the suffering caused even to the victor is so terrible, that the difference between those who win and those who lose is only a difference in

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degree. The horror and the suffering are not confined to one side, and it is only the hope that, taught by much sorrow, we shall learn to avoid it for the future, that makes us keep up our courage and determination. So in the present terrible war that has overtaken us, our vows that we would fight the matter to a finish are always followed by "and never again, no, never again, shall this be possible."

So we resolve, but in fact we have no idea how to set about it. That does not, however, mean that we lack prophets. We have plenty of them who have absolutely certain cures. There are the socialists, there are pacifists, there are the various Churches. "Follow my advice and war shall cease," they tell us; but I do not think that we much believe in them. You won't stop war by denouncing it as terrible, and proving its horrors. Everyone knows them. You

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won't stop war by arbitration treaties, because no nation will arbitrate in a matter that it considers affects its honour or its vital interests. It would tear up any treaty and disregard any award that affected it vitally. And, moreover, arbitration does not apply to civil war. No nation would allow itself to be "treated" or "awarded" to death. You won't stop war by declaring that all war is wicked, for that is not true; the world being as it is, wars of self-defence are not wicked, nor even all wars of aggression, and nobody knows which is which. You won't stop war by an United States of Europe, because United States and United Kingdoms under stress become disunited States and Kingdoms. You won't stop war by building temples of Peace, and offering prayers and hymns thereto in the daily or weekly papers. You won't stop war by proving that "it does not

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pay.” Belgium is not fighting for money. And as for the Churches, were not most wars under their ægis and, therefore, holy wars ?

And further, even if war could be abolished and peace enforced upon the world by some machinery, or some teaching, would not that be worst of all ?

It is not so very long ago that the rise of temperature in a fever patient was regarded as the great evil. Men in health have a normal temperature, and when a man's temperature rose, and he became flushed and heated, and perhaps delirious, it seemed as if it were the heat itself which caused the man's sickness and perhaps death. Therefore, if the fever could be subdued, the evil would be exorcized. So it seemed. And when the new drugs antipyrin and other drugs that lower the temperature were discovered, it seemed as if the cure were

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found. Yet it was not so, the patient's temperature was brought down, but he died all the more surely. And, in fact, instead of decreasing mortality the "cure" increased it.

We know now that a high temperature is Nature's method, the only method, of killing the bacteria in the blood which would otherwise kill the patient. The fever was Nature's cure for a secret and deadly poison. Fever can be prevented by not allowing the poison to enter the blood, but once it has done so fever is Nature's cure.

So it may be, so we think it is, with war. It is Nature's mode of curing a hidden disease that might otherwise be mortal, and could we by artificial means stop war, the patient would die.

Therefore, all these specifics for curing war cause in us more doubt and alarm than confidence. They are based on no

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true knowledge of human nature and on no true diagnosis of the evil. They would do, we fear, far more harm than good. For by stopping war we might kill civilization, and even life itself. If we are to have peace, let it be a real peace and not a pretence, a natural peace and not an artificial one, a free and living peace, not a dead letter enforced upon us.

It seems to us that all our prophets are no better than quack doctors, bent on advertising their own goods and that only. They explain nothing to us either of the nature of war, of peace or of humanity, nor do they explain how their patent medicines could act. We are to have faith, shut our eyes and do as we are told.

But we do not care about that. We are tired of this wild empiricism. We do not believe in patent medicines. We want not prescriptions but knowledge.

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We want to know more about war, its causes and effects, before we undertake any treatment. And when we ask for this we get—nothing.

Yet, if we are really to prevent war, we must have this knowledge. We must not go catching at straws and deluding ourselves with vain hopes. We must know what we are about.

Let us therefore consider this matter, and see what we can discover.

In the first place, what is war?

The answer is simple. War means destruction. It is the destruction first of laws, conventions, institutions, morality, and next the destruction of life and property. War creates nothing, it merely destroys. It is true that many people deny this and claim for war that it brings out qualities of courage, self-denial, discipline, endurance, enthusiasm, that are atrophied in peace time, and so war is a

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creative force ; but that is nonsense. These qualities are inherent in mankind. If during peace time they are stifled by civilization that is the fault of civilization. If war releases them from the lethargy in which civilization has buried them, it is because war destroys a false civilization and allows these qualities to come again to the light of day War does not create them ; it frees them by breaking their bonds. A true civilization would be made for man and allow due exercise to all his faculties. Civilizations into which men can only be fitted by atrophying the best part of their natures are false civilizations. War destroys them.

War is therefore a destructive agency and nothing else. Let us never forget that.

And now let us consider the cause of war.

The usual process is to look for the causes of a war in previous events. For

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instance, it is usual to say that the reason we are fighting Germany is because Germany in her attack on France is violating Belgium, whose neutrality we have guaranteed—as did Germany also. But why does Germany attack France, and why, if she must attack France, must she do so through Belgium? And why did we guarantee the neutrality of Belgium? And if we considered it vital to keep that promise, why did we not have an army strong enough to enforce it? And why now must we stake our national existence on maintaining that guarantee? And when you have completely answered these questions—if you can—you will find that you have only answered them by raising others.

There was one war that I, for many years, quite thirty years, studied most carefully, not only in books but from actors, not only on one side but on both:

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and that was the Indian Mutiny. There are many books that profess to explain its causes. Here are some alleged causes : The annexation of Oude, the depletion of the English garrison, the greased cartridges, the English attitude to the people, each or all "caused" the war. But the annexation of Oude was inevitable. If Oude had not been annexed the situation would have been impossible, so the annexation of Oude did not "cause" the mutiny, but the situation that necessitated the annexation. And this situation followed naturally on . . . and so on, going back to before Clive. Again, the depletion of the English garrison followed on the Crimean war, and that on events in Syria, and those—so we go on again.

It was the English temperament that made the conquest of India possible to us, and anyhow our temperament cannot be changed. It is innate.

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And the greased cartridges were merely an excuse. In normal times they would have attracted no attention whatever. The causes of war, as of anything else, are not to be found in events. No event is, or could be, related to another event as cause and effect. Events are caused by forces, and the events of history are caused by men, who in their turn are governed by their minds. The causes of events are therefore in men's minds.

I will take an instance.

A tower falls; why? It is blown down in a gale or shaken by an earthquake, or gravity pulls it down. That is the final cause, a natural force. But had its foundations been secure, it would have withstood these natural forces, so the real cause of its fall is faulty foundations. Now the cause of the faulty foundations was either bad plans, bad material, or bad work, and all these come from a

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defect in the mind of the architect, the builder, or the contractor. Thus the real cause that the tower fell was in the mind of a man or men, want of foresight, want of ability, want of honesty, or so on. So it is with all men's institutions; their causes are in the mind.

What then are the causes of war?

If we look at the history of Europe for the last two thousand years, it is, with a short respite of the *Pax Romana*, a history of incessant wars. What is the history of these wars?

Now the general history of all wars is the same. It is a fight for freedom, and *in the end* freedom always wins. I will give you a few examples.

Rome conquered the European world. She was able to do so and to maintain her conquest for a time because her rule meant freedom. Her civilization and her ideals were so much truer than that

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of any of the surrounding peoples that her conquest and rule meant a real progress towards freedom. The peoples she conquered one after another were sunk in superstition, were ruled without any semblance of justice; and Rome brought a real advance to all these peoples. They were wars for freedom, and freedom won.

When several hundred years later these conquered peoples rose against Rome and cast off her rule, they were again at war for freedom, because Roman rule had degenerated into a rigid and lifeless system and choked all further development of her conquered peoples. They rebelled and they won their freedom.

And this is what happened time after time. It is the history of all wars. Take the wars of the French Revolution and Empire. The Revolution was an intestine war for freedom to throw off

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the unbearable bonds of Kings by divine right, of nobles by divine right, of churches by divine right. It succeeded. The subsequent external wars were to maintain that freedom—they succeeded. The invaders were defeated and destroyed. Then came a change. Wars still continued and against the same enemy, but the rôles were reversed. France sought to dominate and enslave Europe and the European states fought for freedom. The Coalition won.

Take for a final example Germany from 1864 and since. The wars of Prussia in 1864, 1866 and 1870 were wars for freedom. Germany had to be freed of Austrian dominance; she had to reach the sea; she had to free herself from the French threat. Germany won. She gained her freedom and became a great nation and free from foreign danger.

But in 1914 the rôles are reversed.

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It is the Allies who are fighting for freedom, not only our own but Germany's also, and it is the Prussian aristocracy which wishes to enslave the world. The issue may be long deciding, but the issue is not in doubt. Freedom will win.

Freedom always wins in the end. I know of no conflict between peoples which has not in the end been won by freedom. This is the case even more markedly in those instances which at first sight would seem contradictions. There is, for instance, the Boer War. It seemed a war in which we tried to deprive a people of their freedom, and yet we won. But, in fact, the war resulted in the defeat of a small and ignorant oligarchy and the Union of all South Africa in a free dominion. It essentially gave freedom which could have come no other way.

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As I have said, every war in the end
✕ results in an advance in freedom, and
I know of no exception.

There then arises the question why, if this be the case, and it is the case, after several thousands of years of almost incessant wars Europe is not yet free. Why has she continually to fight anew for freedom? The answer is inevitable. Because she does not know how to use freedom; because in peace there are influences that destroy freedom; because, no sooner is freedom in one way acquired by war than a new slavery arises. For freedom is not an end in itself, it is only a means to an end. It is liberty to raise up a new civilization, to acquire new ideas, new methods, new objectives. Freedom is only valuable when you use it to do right. If you do wrong your freedom rapidly disappears again.

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Now that has always been the case. No sooner was freedom acquired by war than a state of civilization was set up that became, in time, unendurable, with the inevitable result of a new war, foreign or intestine. No civilization we have made has been true, based on true ideas, directed towards a true end. Every civilization we have seen has become a slavery and could find its solvent only in war. When nations are involved in war it is because their civilization has proved a failure. This is true not only of the aggressor but of the defenders.

Consider our state in the summer of 1914.

We called ourselves a democracy, that is to say, a State in which the will of the people obtains. Our method of ascertaining that "will" was by the election of members into a House of Commons which we declared was re-

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presentative of the majesty of the people, and expressed its wisdom. That was our theory.

In fact, the House of Commons had sunk into disrepute with all classes, and with it the system of election that produced it. The House itself was widely denounced as a windy humbug, and its members were so far from being held to be representative that they were generally said to have succeeded in their elections by misrepresentations, and when elected, to be mere puppets of a secret caucus.

Ulster was openly preparing to resist its orders by force, and the rest of Ireland as openly prepared to attack Ulster.

The labouring classes were discontented not only with their lot in life, but with representative institutions, and openly talked of following Ulster's lead. Even those who supported the decisions of

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the present House were dissatisfied with the system.

We had no real Second Chamber and none in sight.

Practically everyone condemned our form of democracy, but no one had any alternative to propose. Neither France nor the United States offered us systems that were any improvement, or gave a wider satisfaction. On the contrary.

For there is this further difficulty, that, even assuming we could discover a form of government which did give expression to the considered will of people on important matters of policy, how could you secure that the will would be right? If the "wise" men have no basis on which to form a judgment, will the foolish find one? As a matter of fact the great majority of people have neither time, nor opportunity, nor education, nor wish

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to form opinions on far-reaching questions, like education, or foreign policy. They are quite aware of this themselves, and they despise a government which consults them. "Shall we pay dogs to bark and then bark ourselves?" they say. So they either vote blindly or on one minor local question, which they do understand, decides how they will elect a representative to deal with Imperial affairs. While evolution tended to make us more and more democratic no one had any hope from democracy, the demos least of all. So it sought new "cure alls" in Socialism and Syndicalism.

Civil and industrial war was imminent.

So much for our political edifice.

Our social edifice was not more satisfactory. Our systems of law, criminal and civil, and of education and of religion were widely condemned by all who had studied them. The gap between classes,

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instead of decreasing under democracy, increased.

And most significant, because most dangerous of all, there was a widespread sex war.

I am not alluding to the exploits of the militants, though they were significant enough, but to a sex antagonism that was more or less universal.

The whole relation of man and woman, in marriage and out of it, was arraigned. The present laws and conventions are, on the whole, even worse for men than for women, and they are the outcome not of men's wishes or ideas, but of ecclesiasticism, whose main supporters have been women. Yet women have blindly visited the shortcomings of law and convention on the men, and under this pretext have claimed a preponderating voice in the direction of the state. They have even hoped, if they got the vote, to change

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their natures and cease to be women, and so rob the world of half its organism. While men have become more and more dissatisfied with the suffrage as a real way of ascertaining the will of the people or obtaining their desires, women have imagined that if only they could get it, the millennium would follow. It was a fight for power, and it was caused by the intolerable nature of the relationship of the sexes enforced by conventions and laws that had no truth in them. The cause was manifest enough and real enough, but the cure was not apparent. The demanded cure would only make things worse.

Science, which, fifty years ago, was sure that it had discovered the essential truths of evolution in natural and sexual selection, has now abandoned these explanations almost entirely, and seeks another explanation in Mendelism, but

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I think we have given all hope up of help from scientific men. Even if Mendelism be truer than natural selection, it is a method, not a cause. Even if you could discover all the means by which evolution proceeds, that would not explain the cause nor the objective of evolution. Science plays with words no less than theology and has its priests as theology has.

Even medicine has become bankrupt. It can diagnose but it cannot tell, except in a very few cases, the cause of disease. And it admits it cannot cure. Nature can cure, but how it cures is not known. There is no theory of life beneath modern medicine. So in those cases where it cannot prevent disease by sanitation, it is reduced to the simple but deadly expedient of either giving the patient the disease by inoculation or of mutilating the victim by cutting off the diseased organ. It does even more than this

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sometimes, it destroys a perfectly healthy part for fear that sometimes it might become diseased and then be incurable. It makes a practice of mutilation. Could there be a sadder confession of failure than the state of the medical profession to-day.

Literature and art were by all admission in a bad way for want of ideals, and music had become a chaos.

And worse than all, the general cry of all but the very young, was that life was really not worth living. It had become banal. Everything had been said and done, and life was dull. The most significant proof of this is the enormous interest taken in games, especially in watching them. Games are an excellent change for all, but when the interest in games becomes excessive it means that life and work have become insipid or distasteful.

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Materially, our well-being increased by leaps and bounds, but our civilization was fast being found out for the failure that it was.

War was inevitable. We expected civil war ; we got foreign war.

Now, though we say, and say truly enough, that in the last resort this war was forced upon us and we did not desire it, that does not mean that we were not in a measure responsible for it. A nation in the state that we were, is a danger not merely to itself, but to its neighbours. It not only cannot fill its proper place in Europe, but it demoralizes others. For instance, we knew that the neutrality of Belgium was necessary to us. We had guaranteed it. We had set our hands to a bond we could not keep. We had incurred a liability we could not meet. We had no sufficient army. And if the reason for this were

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not that our politicians did not see the danger, but that the country could not be made to understand the necessity for an army large enough to meet our obligations, it makes no difference. The intelligence of the people is according to the education given it. Our civilization is to blame. Had we had a true civilization we should have been ready to meet our obligations, and had this country been able to make up its obligations on the spot, this war would not have happened.

And the same remark applies to all the other countries involved, except Belgium, who is the victim. Look at France. Ever since 1870 she has been only two thirds alive. Her population has not increased but decreased. She has not found life worth living and therefore not worth increasing. Her civilization is played out and she feels it. If she has not dissolved, it has been external

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pressure that held her together and not internal cohesion.

And as to Germany, does she not declare that life has for long been so intolerable that she must throw herself into a mad effort for universal dominion, or perish? The utter failure of her own civilization, which is only our civilization raised to a higher degree, drives her on, and the manifest failure in the civilization of her neighbours gave her hope of winning. And if she lost—well, she only lost what was not worth keeping—life.

War, therefore, comes from a failure of civilization, not in one Power but in all. We are involved in a common failure, for all our civilizations are much the same. The differences are slight, and not differences of principle but of method, degree or detail or race.

We are all to blame and are all to suffer.

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And after the war what? How shall we prevent war in future?

The war will end in giving us all freedom in one form. Germany will be freed of her military caste, France, Belgium and ourselves will be free of the menace of Germany. But that is all. The war will prove no solvent for our other troubles, nor for those of France and Germany. It will not settle the Irish question, the Syndicalist question, the sex question, the thousand and one questions that are now put off but will recur worse than ever.

We shall survive the bombardment from without, but what about the explosions from within?

Yet what are we to do? Is there any better civilization than ours that we can adopt? We look round and see none. American civilization differs from ours only in detail, and where it differs it is usually, we think, for the worse,

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not the better. We see nothing in their social or political civilization that attracts us. And in the rest of the world it is even worse. Where are we to look for the ideas that can be the base of a new and a true civilization? Not in the present.

If we look back at history to see what help we can get from the past, what do we find? We find that the best civilization the world has ever seen, that of Rome, was still only temporary and unsatisfactory, and fell. Then for a long time all European civilizations were based on Christianity, with the result that Europe was reduced to a state of ignorance, anarchy and despair that surpass words.

The only civilizations in the Middle Ages which had any value were those of the Turks and Saracens, then free peoples pressing forward under an idea of freedom. But they too fell under the heel

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of priests, Mahommedan Moulvies, and their civilization disappeared.

Then came the Renaissance. A partial return to free ideas, that is, to common sense and progress, became rapid. But this progress in each state always stopped before long because their freedom to change to meet the changes of life disappeared. Then by wars and revolutions new freedom was obtained, and again was only successful for a time, and then fell into the same abyss.

The French Republic at the end of the eighteenth century created a *tabula rasa* by destroying all the old institutions that strangled it, and started again fair. But although France never again fell back into such slavery as it had thrown off, it failed to find any true system of civilization. So it had to call in Napoleon to establish a despotism, and he led France to ruin.

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The French started again in 1815, rebelled in 1830, again in 1848, fell into despotism 1852, were crushed in 1870, and started fair again, but have still more markedly failed to find any civilization to content them. And the history of other nations varies in details only. Our present civilization in England has two objects, wealth and sport, and if it is not in ruins to-day it is because it is braced up by an outside war. To look back is to look at two thousand years of complete failure with nothing that will help us.

CHAPTER II

THE FALLACY OF ETHICS

AND though our civilization is tumbling about our ears, and our only comfort is the hope that, when this trouble is over, we will create a new civilization that will be proof against all storms, we have no idea how we are to set about it. It must have true foundations, but we do not know what those foundations are. We have tried empiricism, and many forms of Christianity, and all have failed us completely. We have seen the societies and civilizations based on Mahomedanism, many forms of Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions which have even been less successful. Where are we to find strong and true foundations for our new civilization ?

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Let us consider what we mean by civilization. The word has its derivation from the word city, but that helps not at all. Civilization has its birth in cities truly, but that is no clue to what it consists of.

And first of all as to what civilization is not—it is not material progress. It is not scientific knowledge, railways, electricity, chemistry, agricultural progress, manufactures or art. These are but means, and they are means that can be used as well for destroying civilization as for creating it. It is the advance in material knowledge that has made this great war so deadly and far reaching, that has enabled millions of men to be brought into the fighting line instead of hundreds of thousands, that has given death and destruction the arms of guns and aeroplanes. Nothing that can be used for peace cannot also be used for war, even

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the organizing ability of great men tends as much to destruction as creation. You have to organize as much for war as peace. It is common amongst many writers to speak of material advance as a form of civilization, but it is not.

Again, it has been common recently for writers to declare the increasing deadliness of weapons will, in time, render war impossible. That is a fancy for which there is no warrant and it would not be for our benefit if it were true. Civilization, therefore, does not lie in material means.

It is true, of course, that no great civilization can be built up without material progress. Just as a man's success in life is dependent on his ability, physical and mental, to realize his aspirations, so it is with a civilization. It requires the means to effect its purpose. But unless these great material means are directed in a right way they occasion

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more harm than good. They can crush as they can create. A true civilization will require an ever-increasing materialism wherein to express itself. Unless it had that, it could never approach its increasing purpose, but would be cramped for want of physical strength and means. But in itself materialism is blind, and applied to the enforcement of wrong ideas is an increasing danger.

Again, civilization does not consist in political forms, neither in extended suffrage, universal suffrage, elected ministers, and all the paraphernalia of what we call democracy, any more than in kings of divine right, hereditary aristocracies, dictatorships or any other form of government. These again are but means. Could we discern the true principles on which any civilization was based, the form of government would be comparatively unimportant. That Government

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would be the best which could carry out the universally accepted ideas. These Governments would act on these ideas and the best form of Government would be that which, under the circumstances, was most efficient. To suppose that a Government is bad or good according to its form alone is nonsense. If no one has any idea of what a true civilization would be, any form of Government will fail.

What then is civilization ?

A civilized nation as a whole is, I take it, ~~an~~ an organism wherein individuals are the cells, and whereof each part is co-ordinated with all the others in a certain relationship. Just as our bodies are made up of many parts and organs, which are again composed of cells. So with a civilized nation and nations.

A true civilized Europe would be an organism, where each part is co-ordinated

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with all the others in a true relationship wherein each has its recognized value. The whole organism would be framed towards the continued approach towards a definite ideal recognized and desired by all the cells. The organism would not be rigid, but living and flexible, so that it would continually grow and adapt itself to changing conditions.

In a true civilization, not man alone, but all life would be included.

No such civilization has ever existed.

Now let us consider its foundations.

As a civilized community is made up of men, each of whom must recognize and willingly co-operate towards the common ideal, the base of any true civilization must be in the consciousness of each and every man. You could not have a willing and intelligent co-operation without that. The purpose must be equally attractive to all, and equally recognizable by all.

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It cannot be a civilization of prophets or priests or scribes or pharisees or scientists or doctors. It must be democratic. That does not, of course, mean that every man has the same position and the same work as everyone else. Just as with the human body there will be brain cells and cells which make the muscles, so with civilization. But no man will complain of the lot which is his, for all will recognize that though the brain to a certain extent commands the limbs, it is only to a certain extent. The limbs have necessities of their own and a will of their own which in its turn commands the brain, and the limbs are as necessary to the purpose as the brains, and are therefore as valuable. And further, that a man's happiness does not depend on either wealth or power but on other things which are much more necessary and which should be open to all.

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This base will be a true base, that is to say, it will be verifiable and understandable by each and every one. It will not consist of revelations nor teachings, nothing will have to be taken on trust because it cannot be verified. It will be verifiable, not from documents of a remote age which are not even authentic, but from the living present. No man need *believe* it to be true, but every man can, if he wish, ascertain that it is true; he will know it to be true because he can feel it.

It will be at first a narrow base, but as the civilization increases it will broaden so that the civilization can rise. It will not be a dead base but a living base, a root extending ever wider and deeper so that the tree can rise even higher towards a desired objective.

On such a base alone can a true civilization be founded. Therefore, the base of a civilization is in the universal mind.

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It is, in fact, an attitude of mind towards the past, the present and the future, which is manifested in conduct.

A true civilization is the outcome of a true perception by each individual of the proper course of conduct for him to adopt towards others, privately, socially and nationally. A true civilization, therefore, is based on a true knowledge of conduct, a perception of right and wrong.

How can that be obtained ?

Up to now have we ever had any true base for conduct—any certain knowledge of what constitutes right and wrong in our relationship to the world ? Let us look at the past and the present.

There is nothing that man has so assiduously striven after throughout all history as some help, some definite guide towards right conduct in life. This necessity is not even confined to man, but seems to be inherent in all life.

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Wherever you find consciousness and activity you find some effort to ascertain how that activity should be rightly used. Everyone who has watched wild life, birds, animals, insects, has recognized at once that they all have some idea, sometimes a very strong and clear idea, I do not say always a right idea, of what they should do and what they should not. To the meaning of their actions which are evidently dictated by their consciousness we have as yet no clue, but that they have a meaning is clear. Wherever we have been able to observe life closely enough we have found a choice of conduct.

The search of man for some means of guidance began before history and it still continues unabated, nay, the search to-day is even more rigorous than before, For man must have some guide in life. He cannot act just by chance. Some

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things are good and some things are evil; we know this by instinct, and we discover more of it by practice. We are continually faced with the necessity of choice. And the first thing that man sought guidance in was a rigid code of ethics. It has always seemed to man that there must be discoverable somewhere, by search, in time, an absolute code of ethics. He has always supposed and he supposes now that there is an absolute right and wrong, that some things are always right, others always wrong. If he could find such a code he would, he thinks, be happy, because then he would always be able to do right and never do wrong, and would so attain an imaginary happiness. All his history he has striven after this Absolute. Yet he has never found it. So far he has found no ethic that will stand the test of experience. Ethics come and go and life

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remains, and man is unhappy. Yet he still seeks after ethics.

What are ethics, and why have they failed? Let me define what the word ethics means.

Ethics means customs.

It does not mean any objective or purpose to be attained, it does not mean the justification a custom may have either in the reason or in experience; it does not mean what seems to us a good custom or a bad custom. It simply means custom. All customs are ethics. It is true that there must be, or must have been at one time, an openly avowed or secretly assumed object in every custom; and sometimes this is obvious. For instance, it is customary to tell the truth for the simple reason, among others, that if it were customary not to tell the truth, men could not combine for any purpose, and no civilization would

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be possible. But often the reason is not known. For instance, most children are taught to say grace before and after meals. Why? I think their teachers would shrink from asserting that there is an Almighty Being so petty, so jealous, so grasping after praise, that he requires to be propitiated before and after each meal, lest He injure the child. But if not this, what is the reason? I think that I know the origin of this custom, but that is beside the question here. Do parents frame a reason to themselves or not? I think not. It is a custom, and that is all. Again, it is a custom after accidentally spilling the salt to throw some over the left shoulder. Why? No one knows. Possibly no one ever knew, for customs sometimes arise spontaneously. It is vaguely felt "better" to do so. Sometimes, again, a custom had at one time an object which has been lost,

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while the custom remained. It is said to be a custom to keep to the right when walking—why the right? Because men carried their swords on the left side. Men no longer carry swords, but the custom remains—and it is useful when observed. It is very hard to kill customs. Generally speaking, the objective of customs is some advantage in life, but not always so. The custom or ethic that it is better for a soldier to be killed than run away has no such objective. On the contrary. Neither can all customs, or indeed many customs, be justified as the result of experience. We have no experience that the soldier who is killed fighting benefits by his courage. His country may, but he? We know nothing at all about what happens after death. Yet this ethic is one of the strongest we have.

Ethics, then, are customs; all customs,

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good, bad, or indifferent, are ethics ; all sayings or teachings that inculcate a fixed course of conduct are ethics.

As I said in the last chapter, there is nothing man has sought for so assiduously as some system of ethics for this reason. To have to think over every act of life is impossible. No one has time for it. Again, it is very exhausting ; there is nothing so tiring as thought. Moreover, most men are afraid of themselves. They don't know why they came into life, nor whence, nor whither they go, nor the meaning of it. The vagueness terrifies them. They are like people suddenly placed in the centre of a wide plain. They want direction, or at least warnings against danger. They think that wisdom can be gained from the past experience of others, and reduced to formulae.

So arose the first ethics that were

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expressed in words. Subconscious or agreed ethics existed long before on certain matters, but the first attempts at the beginning of a code of ethics seem to have been proverbs. Here are some common to most peoples :

“ Do not put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day.”

“ Marry in haste and repent at leisure.”

“ Well begun is half done.”

“ A burnt child dreads the fire.”

“ Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves.”

Timid people were fond of these proverbs because they obviated the trouble of thought. The proverb maker has done the thinking; all you had to do was to follow his advice. And so a complete code might have arisen, for there are proverbs about most things in life, but

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for an unfortunate circumstance—the proverbs contradict themselves. You could not make one code but two, diametrically opposed. For instance, set against the above given proverbs these :

“ More haste, less speed.”

“ Happy the wooing that’s not long in doing.”

“ Fine before seven, wet before eleven.”

“ Familiarity breeds contempt.”

“ Penny wise, pound foolish.”

Which are right?—the first given or the second? No one knew. Each side had its adherents. Both could not be completely true as they are directly opposed. If either or both were half truths, then you were no better off when you had no proverbs.

Then some genius came to the conclusion that both were false because both

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were extreme. Safety, he said, lay in moderation. *In medio tutissimus ibis*. All extremes are bad.

But neither was this found to be true. There are occasions when the only safety lies in the extreme. *In medio tutissimus ibis* was balanced by “the man who hesitates is lost,” “Whatever your hand findeth to do, do it with all your might,” and certain sayings about lukewarmness. In fact, it soon became obvious that proverbs did not govern circumstances, but that circumstances governed proverbs. It depended on circumstances whether the extreme on this side, the middle, or the further extreme was true. Thus, proverbs only left man where he was. He hoped to overcome circumstances by fixed rules and so rise superior to chance, but he found that it was circumstances that dictated to him what he should do. He did not like this.

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He hoped to overcome circumstances and the necessity of justly observing these circumstances and framing his actions according to them by having a fixed ethic, but he failed. Early man failed to find any Absolute, and late man has not done better. The more insistently he applied himself to find a fixed ethic the more certainly did he ascertain that there was none. Consider a little and you will see that this is so. Take truth, for instance. As I have already said, truthfulness is an essential to the progress of man. Were not men truthful nothing could be done. Mutual confidence is based on truthfulness, and in confidence all civilization consists. Yet to this rule of truth, how many exceptions are there? The classic instance is that, while in the country, you see an honest man hiding from would-be assassins. The assassins come up to you and demand if you have

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seen anyone. If you speak the truth, or even if you refuse to answer, they will continue their search and find him and murder him. The rigid adherent to ethics tells the truth, and is accessory to a brutal murder; the honourable man tells a lie.

But without going to such extreme instances as this there are, in daily life, innumerable occasions for a deviation from or concealment of the truth. A man asks you for your opinion on his conduct. Your opinion may frankly be that he has acted like a fool. You don't say so. You decline to express an opinion, or, if he is a friend of yours, your disapproval is wrapped up in pleasant words. A child asks you a question regarding a subject which is better for the time being wrapped in mystery. To refuse an answer would be merely to whet its curiosity. You invent an answer which

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is not true, but will serve the purpose of quenching the child's curiosity for the time. A very sick man asks the doctor his opinion. The doctor knows that if he tell the truth the shock may kill the patient. He tells him that there is very little the matter, and the patient recovers. Every one acknowledges to himself daily that there are many cases where only a part of the truth should be said. In fact, if truth be the base of civilization, so too is untruth. No person who consistently spoke the whole truth as he conceived it to be could remain in intercourse with his fellow men. They would kill him justifiably. A dead, unbroken ethic to tell the truth would ruin this world just as certainly as an inviolable rule never to speak the truth. It is the same in all other matters. Take the further instance of "Thou shalt not kill"; "Thou shalt not steal." Were

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either of these made absolute, society would dissolve. You must not go about killing people in peace time, but you not only may, but must do so in war. Even in peace time you have the right of private defence; you may kill a person who attacks you dangerously. And though this is rarely exercised it is there, it is known to be there. Were it abolished, who would be safe?

It is part of your duty to kill the armed enemy in war. But is war justifiable? Is there an ethic of war? There are people who say that it is never justifiable, there are peace at any price cranks, there are those who say war is wrong because it never pays.

Yet the common sense of the world laughs at such ethics. Should Belgium, then, lie down before the Germans? Should France? Should we? There is no doubt a right and wrong in war, but

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we have not discovered it. Some people tell us wars of aggression are wrong and of defence are right. What is a war of aggression? Did the Northern States of America wage a war of aggression against the Southern States? The war against Spain was a war of aggression; and some of our Indian wars have been called wars of aggression; were they wrong? The test is evidently not in any hard and fast rule, in any absolute ethic.

Again, "Thou shalt not steal." No? Then, if a man have a pistol, say, which he is using in such a way as to be a danger to himself or others, you may not take it away, for to do so would be robbery? And what about taxation? All taxation comes within the definition of a robbery. It is taking a man's property without his consent. All early societies see this and hate taxation; yet without it, how could we get on?

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People who do not know law by experience, imagine that in laws we have discovered absolute truths about life; those accustomed to see them in their working know that it is not so. Laws are generalizations which we have to use for want of better, but which are not absolute truths. Directly you make law absolute, it becomes unendurable. It is the common sense of judges and juries—mainly juries—which, by bringing in some other test than law, makes it possible. “The height of law is the height of injustice.”

Further, even if laws were more nearly right than they are, or than we see any chance of ever making them, they would remain purely negative. They tell you what not to do, and not what you should do; they threaten punishments, but offer no rewards. They are applicable to but a very small part of our life. Therefore,

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law offers us no just base for any system of conduct.

And conventions are in much the same category. Conventions are prescribed courses of conduct, in certain cases infractions of which are punished by the opinion of society. Where they are the outcome of experience they are often of great use, but many conventions are the outcome of imitation. Thus it has been a convention for three hundred years or more for women to ride on side-saddles and not astride. But this convention is ascribed to no other foundation than imitation of a Spanish princess who found it a more convenient way of displaying her embroidered dresses. It is rapidly disappearing.

More conventions arise out of the needs of Society, and are, in fact, the banks which confine Society and make it flow in a well-ordered stream instead of it

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being a disorderly flood. They make life easier and prevent friction. They have great value provided their origin and meaning are understood. But they refer generally to small matters of conduct, and as Society changes, so old conventions give way or disappear, and new ones arise. They are not invariable, but are relative only to the state of things.

There remains philosophy.

Philosophy has, from the beginning, been concerned with two matters, the acquisition of knowledge and the discovery of a base for conduct, and it has completely failed in both quests. It tried to acquire fresh knowledge, not by experience, nor investigation, but by abstract reasoning, that is to say by piling words on words. But knowledge cannot be acquired in such a way. Words are only symbols, and most of the things for which they stand have not an absolute

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but only a relative value, which constantly varies. Their reasoning becomes only a juggling with words, and very often a childish juggling. Look, for instance, at the philosophic controversy as to whether space and time are things or "nothings," and if neither, what their nature can be. Herbert Spencer is concerned with this.

As to conduct, philosophy is usually empirical, and consists of scattered maxims, more or less true, like proverbs, and has no base. Sometimes it has a base in the pursuit of pleasure or the avoidance of pain, which simply ignore the greater and deeper emotions of mankind. To Herbert Spencer the data of morality are "the elements of that equilibrium between constitution and conditions of existence which is at once the moral ideal and the limit towards which we are progressing."

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I have no idea what that means.

It is true there is Kant's Categorical Imperative and that I will refer to later on. There is a Categorical Imperative in life and Kant was right. His trouble was that he did not know in what it consisted.

Philosophers were men who "loved wisdom," but their product has been called philosophy and not wisdom. In general estimation to "take life philosophically" means not to fret about the inevitable, an useful quality, but hardly a complete guide to comfort. And for the rest philosophy is not useful. It is not real. It has the same relation to a real knowledge of life as alchemy has to chemistry. It is mirage.

Therefore in proverbs, maxims, laws, conventions and philosophies mankind has failed to find any absolute test of right

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and wrong, any base on which to build a code of conduct. All that it has found are generalizations which are never completely true, and which, if accepted as the absolute, would destroy civilization as certainly as the want of generalizations. The secret of what determines right and wrong has not been discovered in any experience of the past, and without that secret no civilization can be true.

CHAPTER III

THE FAILURE OF EXPERIENCE

BEFORE going on to religion, and considering if it contains any true base for conduct, it will be more convenient to see why man has failed to find any true system of conduct by experience. Why is it that in, say, four thousand years, mankind has discovered no method by which to regulate his acts? Why have ethics of all kind proved futile?

To discover this we must consider human nature, because the key lies there. If no system of ethics has approved itself to experience, it is because the past *alone* will not suffice to man, because his nature requires more than even a perfected past, it wants a new future. What then does his nature look to?

And if no ethics have approved them-

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selves to the consciousness of mankind, it is not merely because experience has falsified them, but because mankind has subconsciously another test which it feels to be more true. Its conscious mentality strives after ethics, but its unconscious instinct tries all the ethics offered to it and rejects them. But why does it try them, and why does it reject them? What is this secret unacknowledged test? Why not bring it into the light and air it? Why does our consciousness seek a code of conduct if our instinct has a test ready always to be supplied? These are interesting subjects.

Let us consider, then, any act you perform. You rise up from your chair. Why? Because you want to go out. You eat. Why? To satisfy hunger. You sleep in order to rise refreshed. Every act you perform has a purpose. It is teleological, that is to say it has an

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objective. Otherwise it would be aimless, purposeless and futile. That it was according to an ethic or custom would not save it from being futile, for an action is good in itself only, in as much as it achieves a purpose. Therefore, no act has, or can have, any intrinsic value of its own; it cannot be right nor wrong in itself, its value is not absolute but relative—relative to the purpose aimed at or achieved.

This last distinction must not be overlooked. I say aimed at, or achieved, because they are rarely the same. The ostensible objective may, in fact, be nil or nearly so, the result achieved may be great.

For instance, a team of cricketers play with another team. The ostensible objective is victory. But the victory aimed at is really little or nothing in itself. It gives nothing, except, perhaps, a little

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more pleasure than losing. It is, as far as results go, a barren result. But victory, although the ostensible objective, was not the real objective, which was to train eye and hand and temper, to learn to subordinate self to a common cause, to pass a pleasant day with friends. These were the real objective, but they could not, like many other things, such as happiness, affection, courage, be directly pursued. In framing the conditions of your match the real objective is kept in view, but the players think only of victory. Otherwise the play would be aimless and dull, and nothing would be achieved. The real objective, therefore, being not victory, but the play, there are rules to control the players. They may not strive for victory by any means at hand, tripping up a batsman, or felling a wicket keeper with a blow. These might help to victory, but victory is only

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the ostensible, not the real, objective. Therefore there are rules, ethics, so framed as to secure the real objective of the game, and these rules or ethics are themselves justified by being teleological. Rules which fail to secure the desired result under the ever-changing conditions become obsolete, and new rules are required.

Thus is not only every act of man teleological, but the ethics by which he binds his acts must, if they are to be accepted, also be teleological, that is to say, directed to the achievement of a purpose. Otherwise they have no value whatever. Right and wrong are, therefore, never absolute qualities, they are never qualities intrinsic to any act or ethic, but are purely relative to the purpose which they subserve.

That is one point to be remembered.

Now this purpose, whether the purpose ostensibly aimed at or that really sought,

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must be an acceptable purpose. It must appeal to mankind as desirable, it must satisfy some instinct that is within him and which approves. Unless the idea of victory appealed to men, you could not get them to pursue a game and so realize the hidden purpose. You will never get willing and eager action out of men, you will never get them to submit cheerfully to hard work, to accept voluntarily rules and limitations unless in pursuance of objects desired by them. They must see the goals aimed at, they must see that the ethics are directed towards the achievement of the goal and are kept so modified as to meet all changes and still achieve their object.

And further, the purpose aimed at must not be a final purpose. If you could ever achieve a final purpose, then life would hold nothing more to be achieved and life would cease. For life is move-

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ment towards the accomplishment of purpose. There is, of course, no such thing in reality as the absolute, but men have been fond of imagining that there should be some such thing as absolute happiness, and placing it before them as an objective. Like all untruths it is disastrous.

And the purpose we consciously pursue must, as far as possible, take us in the same direction as evolution, that is to say, the inevitable change and progress of the world, takes us. It is no use trying to swim against the stream or kick against the pricks. We shall only come to grief. We must help nature, and not try to defy her.

But—and this is the most important point—although life is movement towards a desirable objective, the real value of life does not lie in the attaining the objective, but in the living. We need an objective to incite us to effort, to fill

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us with hope, to co-ordinate our progress, but life lies not in attainment but in pursuit. That is its nature. Victory is little ; what really matters is that we all should play the game and enjoy it. If we are not all doing so, either the objective sought, or the means by which it is sought, or both, are wrong.

Life is always changing. Change is a quality inherent in life. Without change life would cease and only existence would remain. It is true that the emotions which form the base of life are always the same, but the forms in which they express themselves vary always. Later on, when I have to explain the true Indian philosophy of Maya, this very simple relation of the unchangeable towards the ever-changeable will be easily understood. Here all I wish to point out is that whereas life is always in essentials the same, the conditions of life, the human

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organism and its environment, are subject to continual variation and progress. In essentials life always repeats itself; in details it never does. Did it do so it would cease to be life at all. Therefore, experience of the past, however perfect, is no complete guide to conduct in the present, because the present conditions are new. They are, it is true, new only in details, but these details are not negligible. They may make but a slight difference, or they may make an enormous difference.

Let us take a very simple instance. It may be said, generally speaking, that the attainment and maintenance of good health has been and is a right objective. This, like all general statements, has many exceptions. A man or woman's duty to their spiritual qualities may come before their duty to their physique, but it is a fair generalization.

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Now there is no doubt that the means to attain good health vary, not only according to nationality and climate, but according to circumstances and to period. What was a good general regimen, say, a hundred years ago in England would not be so now. Our bodies are not the same as those of our grandparents. There has been evolution, which means change. Further, we make in some ways far greater and in others far less demands on our physique. Life was never before quite what it is to-day, and therefore our necessities are changed. So it will always be.

And further, no living organism is in all respects absolutely the same as another. No blade of grass is identical with another, no insect with another, no man with another man. In general you may say that all men are the same in as much as all are born of women, are similarly con-

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structed, and if you cut off the head of any man he will cease to live. But within these broad limits there are astounding differences. One man can endure what kills another man. Milk and eggs are reckoned good food; I have known men on whom they acted like poisons. Some men have marvellous ears for music; others cannot tell "God Save the King" from "Pop goes the Weasel"; and so on. Music will draw some men as the Pied Piper drew the children; it drives others towards a frenzy of discomfort. You cannot standardize life except by destroying it.

If now you will keep in mind these various qualities inherent in life, you will see why all codes framed only on experience of the past, and any rigid code at all, have failed and must fail.

In the first place, although our present life 'proceeded from the past it is aimed

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at the future. It is based upon the past, but its direction is forwards, towards some imagined or hoped-for condition ahead of us which fixes its ethics. That is to say that our ethics come from the future, not the past; they are the conditions under which we can best obtain our objective. Nothing is right or wrong by any inherent quality, but acts are right in so far as they help to our objective, and wrong in so far as they hinder it. Thus our ethics cannot be fixed things, for they depend on circumstances which are always changing. What will help us to our objective in one set of circumstances and therefore be right, will hinder us under other circumstances and therefore be wrong. Thus though experience of the past is helpful, it is not absolute. Because we are always moving into new country. Suppose even we all agreed on our objective, say the greater happiness

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of the greater number, and suppose we were all agreed on the meaning of happiness and on the conditions which would produce this result, we should still be unable to have any absolute code because circumstances are always changing, and actions which yesterday had one result might to-morrow have a different—even a contrary result. That is one reason no absolute code could ever exist. Another even stronger reason is the fact that, were any absolute code discovered and maintained, life would cease. For another inherent quality of life is the power of judgment or choice. Were an absolute code discovered and maintained this power would end. There would be a fixed right and wrong for every act and life would become mechanical. You would know for a certainty how everyone would act, and your own acts would be as rigidly prescribed as those of an

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automaton. All need for choice or judgment would have disappeared, all change become impossible; there would be no objective to strive after and life would have ceased.

That is obvious. It is, in fact, one of the most elementary things in human nature, and there is, therefore, a consistent attempt to ignore it, or at any rate to suppress it. Now you cannot suppress nature, nor any part of it, "Naturam expelles furcâ, tamen usque reeurret," and if you ignore human nature you simply build up civilizations which can only dissolve in war.

Now mankind have always been sub-consciously aware of this truth. It has with its reason sought after fixed codes, and it has with its consciousness always rejected them. For man has sub-conscious knowledge of a great deal more than has yet risen into consciousness.

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His mind has postulated and tried to find absolute right and wrong; his subconsciousness has rejected them. For what reason? That has been a difficulty, because his subconsciousness, while firmly rejecting fixed codes, has never been able to explain why. There has been a constant war between his intelligence and his instinct, wherein the instinct was true but voiceless, and his reason wrong but voluble. He has acted one way and talked another, and explained the discrepancy by denouncing "the weakness of human nature," the truth being with nature and not with the intellect.

The reason why, in fact, mankind has in action broken all fixed codes, is that humanity is not only teleological, but that it has, within, some dim idea of the objective it ought to pursue.

Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that humanity has a vague con-

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sciousness of the methods it should use and should not use. It is certain that fixed ethics are no use. It is certain in some emergencies of what is right and what is wrong. It is also conscious that this certainty must come from an instinctive knowledge of what is the true objective of life, but it has never been able to formulate the true objective. That, also, has not been for want of trying. The Epicureans, for instance, imagined it to be freedom from fear; others have declared it to be pleasure, ease, comfort, self-command, the 'greatest good of the greatest number,' peace, purity, and so on. But none of these teleologies have given satisfaction. None fit the facts of human nature. An Epicurean who will dogmatically tell you one day that "freedom from fear" is the ideal he seeks, will to-morrow volunteer for some war, or other hazardous pro-

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ceeding, and so give the best of all denials to his words. So do they all. Nevertheless, there is in life, not merely in human life, but all life, a movement somewhither. Evolution means that movement, and all life is engaged in perpetual evolution. Did it stop, life would cease, because evolution is inherent in life, and neither can exist without the other.

This further is certain, that this objective lies far beyond the span of any individual lifetime. We know that, because many of the deepest actions of men have no justification in their lifetime. You may take the emotion of love, for instance. I think that the experience of humanity shows that the love of the sexes, with its concomitants of marriage and children, yields on an average quite as much pain as pleasure. Yet it is universally approved and accepted.

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Its general result is the continuation of life, the sacrifice of present life to future life.

Why do we do that ? Because emotion makes us. But why do we approve and praise that emotion ? From some instinct that is justified. But that justification is not in our individual lifetime.

Why does the soldier die ? In all ages it has been considered a praiseworthy act and sure to meet its reward. When and where ?

And so it is with many other things.

Life is instinctively conscious that there is an objective ; it has in some ways an instinctive consciousness of what will and will not lead to that objective, but the objective itself it has been quite unable to formulate, because it has tried to learn only from the past. It has continually framed all sorts of objectives only to reject them. There has never been any

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objective commonly acknowledged by all people. But without a true objective you can't have either true work or true play—and you can't have any code that will be satisfactory. A code must have a sanction just as cricket laws have, and be flexible, as much more flexible than cricket laws as life is more complicated and changeable than the game. No such code has been found because no such code has ever been looked for. The search has been for the Absolute.

CHAPTER IV

THE TEACHINGS OF RELIGIONS

WE now come to religion as the base of civilization. By religion I mean the system inculcated by a priesthood, not only in its words but in its acts; and in particular this chapter is concerned with Christianity. Much of what it contains is true of all religions, but I have not thought it necessary to discuss the others in detail. Christianity is fixed on the European races and there is not in the least likelihood that there will ever be any conversion in Europe to Mahomedanism or Buddhism. As children our minds are so hypnotized that we can rarely afterwards ever see Christianity with frank, true eyes, but as regards other religions we are wide awake to their defects and absurdities,

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and we are not likely to succumb to them. Hinduism destroyed the ancient civilizations of India, and Mahomedanism destroyed the Arab civilization of the Omniades. The Jews never had a civilization ; how could they ?

The ordinary European by “ religion ” means Christianity, and as he also accepts the priests of the various Churches as the mouthpieces of God he must accept their interpretation of what Christianity means. Let us go back, therefore, to the decline of Rome and the rise of Christianity.

As I have said, Christianity criticized the base of the Roman civilization as being empirical, material and atheistic, and this in their criticism was true. The Roman religion, like that of Greece, had become unintelligible and chaotic. The original tellers of Zeus and the other Gods, and the framers of the early myths

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and legends were true seers and thinkers. They saw the world about them very clearly and they gave a true expression to what they saw. There is deep and permanent truth in all the early myths. What this was I explain in a later chapter. But even before the foundation of Rome all real truth had departed. No one understood the significance of the Gods. The myths had become debased and overgrown, and priests had taken up their interpretation for their own advantage. Jupiter, Venus, Mars, Pluto and others, which were to the early seers names for universal emotions and influences within the world, building the world, had become individuals situated without the world, to be propitiated by offerings through priests. The marvellous legend of the river Ameles, which flows through the plain of Lethe, had come to be supposed to be a narrative of fact,

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and very depressing fact. There was no real idea at all of life after death. The soul went to Hades, where there was no life, but only a miserable existence. Therefore the religion of Rome was simply a matter of propitiatory offerings to gods, or to their representatives, the priests. They were useful also for ceremonial occasions. But all the real true idea had long passed away from the Roman Pantheon, and it remained merely as an ornamental debris floating upon the surface of the Roman civilization. Their religion could give the Romans no far and true objective on which to base a progressive civilization. And, in fact, the great success of their civilization was due to the fact that it was based on common sense and experience, and not any religious ideal. Even so it eventually failed. Therefore the Christian Church came forward with its ideals and its

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theory of conduct. It claimed to know wherein right and wrong consisted, and to have a complete system of conduct. Let us see what that system was.

When the Christian Church became firmly established on the ruins of Rome, what did it inculcate? What, then, were the Christian ethics that were to renew the world? The only true means of regulating conduct is, as I have shown, by the holding out of a desirable objective, or succession of objectives, to the attainment of which conduct is directed. What was the Christian objective? It had none in this world. It denounced the world as evil, to be endured as best we could in order to reach a state of complete happiness and idleness in some imagined heaven. Thus it began by denying the essential truth that the value of life lies in the living, and not in the attainment of any objective. It supposed an im-

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possibility, that is, an Absolute, and because it saw very well that there could be no Absolute in life as we know it, because the Absolute is death, it had to imagine a heaven. It could assert anything it liked of this heaven because no one could prove it to be wrong.

Thus it had no base for any civilization here, but was professedly a despair of life in this world. Now you can't build a civilization in a world which you despair of.

Still it had a code of ethics in this world. What was this code?

Most people who imagine themselves religious will answer that this question is simple; there is the Sermon on the Mount and other sayings of Jesus and Paul and other people. These are the Christian ethics.

I will have to consider these sayings in themselves later; all I need here to say is that no Christian Church has

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ever acted on them, or professed to act on them. Nothing could be further from Christian ethics in practice than these sayings. And not only in practice has every Christian Church repudiated them as a certain guide, but no Christian Church has ever professed to do so. Laymen may talk irresponsibly about conduct, but no Church as a Church ever does so. They all have a rigid code of ethics, but it is not concerned, except superficially, with your conduct to your neighbour. The only relation that Christianity considers is the relationship between men and the priesthood which it calls God. In fact, this is true not only of Christianity, but of every religion the world has ever seen. No religion holds your conduct to your neighbour to be the first essential, or indeed essential at all. It may be convenient, or advisable, but not essential. The essential of every

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religion has been the relation, not between man and man, but between men and priests. It is the ceremonies of religion, conducted by the priests, that are fixed and absolute. This is never denied by the priests themselves. It is, on the contrary, steadily affirmed by them. It is curious to note that it is the ignorant layman who denies this and talks vaguely about high ideals and "true religion"; priests do not do so, except they are ignorant themselves or are trying to impose on your ignorance. True they will also talk at large very often, but if pressed they do not usually lack the courage of their opinions. The test of a religion is its ceremonies. It was a priest who said, "Sacrifices, lustral waters, expiations, initiations, bloody or joyous rites, this has formed the life of all liturgies, and the functions of *all* priesthoods." These, in fact, are religion.

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Everyone can easily test this as regards religions he knows. What makes a man a member of any Christian Church? To have been baptized into it, to acknowledge its priests, and observe its ceremonies. It is not in the least a question of conduct, apart from this. No man, however admirable his life, would by that only become a member of, say, the Churches of Rome or of England. The worst sinner does not cease to belong to his Church as long as he acknowledges its priests. He will repent to them, be absolved by them and go to heaven. The outsider, no matter how admirable his conduct, goes to hell.

There is no word so consistently abused as the word Christian. We hear continually of true Christians, Christian conduct, Christian virtues and so on, and the speakers apparently in their own mind attach and wish their hearers to attach

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to the word some altruistic meaning referring to conduct to your neighbours. It has no such meaning, and could have none. Any Church or any Society based on any absolute rule or rules of conduct could not exist for long. The maxims of the Sermon on the Mount, for instance, are not peculiarly Christian. They were not new. They may have been to the Jews, but elsewhere they were well known hundreds of years before. And they were not meant to be absolute. They were given simply as additions to previous rules, to balance them, just as two sets of proverbs balance each other. No Church, no Society which made these maxims absolute could endure, and no Christian Church has ever attempted to enforce them—on the contrary, the mark of all religions has been their denunciation and persecution. No Church could exist otherwise. If it admitted that other re-

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ligions or want of religion were as good it would lose its meaning. If our priests are God, others must be the Devil. The essential part of every religion is its ceremonies. In fact, in many religions there was nothing but ceremonies. I mean there was no question of conduct at all. In Druidism and the religion of Mexico, in fact in all early religions, conduct has no part. Look at how Abraham acquired his wealth. Read it again and reflect on it. What would happen to Abraham to-day? And what he did is reprobated in all societies, even in the earliest.

Religions are made up of ceremonies under a priesthood, and this must be so. No other customs or ethics are fixed. A Church to hold together must be held by bonds that are invariable. No course of conduct is invariable, and therefore no Church could exist for one moment

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that depended on conduct. It must be held together by ceremonies which are, in fact, religion itself. They bind. They divide exactly and clearly the sheep within from the goats outside. This is not to be taken as a reproach against religion. It is simply the acknowledgment of a fact. If you are to have a religion at all it must be held together by ceremonies; there is no other way. Religion, all religions, are matter of obedience to priests, and their ceremonies and nothing else is necessary.

Look at all the religious persecutions, of Buddhists by Hindus, of Hindus by Mahommedans and vice-versâ, of Mahommedans by Christian Churches, of Churches against Protestantism and the reverse—what part had “conduct” in these? It had none whatever. One religion has not persecuted another because it alleged that the conduct of the heretics was bad,

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but because they refused obedience to the Church and would not accept its ceremonies. Never anything but this. Remember I am speaking of religious persecution. There has frequently been persecution or suppression of divers religions by the Civil power expressly for bad conduct—the Assassins in the near East, the Thugs in India, Mormonism in America, are cases everyone will have heard of. But persecution of religion is never concerned with conduct apart from ceremonies and obedience to priests. Read the records of the Inquisition, for instance. To commit murder was nothing compared to disrespect shown to the sacred wafer. One could be expiated, not the other.

Conduct is imposed by the community, by civilization, never by religions. They consist of ceremonies. And it is because they do consist of ceremonies that they have so much success.

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From the beginning, as I have said, man has been oppressed by the vagueness, the solitude, the inexplicable nature of the life in which he has been cast. He could find no maxims that were always true to help him. But religion declared it could do so, and at a comparatively trifling cost. The priests would save you if you acknowledged them and observed the ceremonies they dictated. They would save you all trouble of thought about a future life, and even in this life they were of immense help. They made themselves so powerful that to serve them was safety, to oppose them death.

The early religions had little or no teaching as to conduct, but the religions which superseded them contained, theoretically, a good deal of teaching as to conduct. I say theoretically, because it never could be more than theory if the Church was to exist at all. It was,

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however, always a conduct of ceremonial. Nevertheless, it had an effect because, whenever it could, religion invaded private life, and under the pretence of morality instituted more and more ceremonies. There is, for instance, marriage. At first Christianity denounced it altogether. Then it allowed it and reduced it to the absolute—of a ceremony. A priest says a form of words over to you, and there you are married for ever. As to the when, the how, the with whom, apart from the prohibited degrees, the Church is not concerned. It has no course of conduct whatever leading to marriage, and none whatever after marriage. Nothing could dissolve the marriage tie. It has a ceremony and that is all, and it is absolute conduct or no conduct. Marriage is really a fact, and not a form, and the pretence of making it a form only has had the worst effect

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on human conduct. But it was all religion could do. No rule of life can possibly be universally true. The absolute is nothing. Now forms are in themselves nothing, hence you can make them absolute, and so get what you may be pleased to call an absolute right or wrong. If the Church has said a formula over a man and woman you have absolute and eternal right. You may fight all day, you may hate each other. No matter. You are husband and wife. She may leave you with another man. *She is your wife.* Divorces are granted by the Civil Power, not the Church. Churches may talk of the duties of wives and husbands, but they do not know what such duties should be, nor do they attempt to enforce any such duties. Conduct, as you see, is little or nothing, the ethic of marriage is a formula. For you cannot standardize humanity, but you

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can standardize formulæ. But the world has generally found out, or is finding out, the futility of formulæ. Truth lies in emotion, not words. The world could not be standardized in conduct, and it is rapidly declining to be standardized in formulæ.

“But,” it will be objected, “even if this be true so far, religions consist of more than this. They are societies formed to maintain and encourage a belief.” That is true, I think, of all religions. Even the fetish worship of savages has a creed within it. But of what does this creed consist but of a formula, and how can you test the believer’s belief except by his repetition of the formula? No conduct has ever been, or could be, a test, as I have repeated before, because conduct cannot be standardized. Besides, none of these creeds have anything to do with conduct. Read, for instance, the verses of

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the Koran which admit you to Moham-
medanism or the Apostles' Creed. They
are mere formulæ, which you show you
accept by repeating them, and that is all.

Let me repeat that no religion is con-
cerned with conduct. When it has taken
conduct under its orders, the result has
been either an entire denial of life as
in the ascetics of all faiths, or a degrada-
tion of conduct as in the Rome of the
Middle Ages. Public opinion forces con-
duct on religion, not the other way. The
only ethic any religion has is ceremony.

Thus was the world provided with
what it demanded—an absolute and rigid
system of ethics, which, while useful
in this world, would ensure safety in
the next. It is true that it did not
apply directly to the troubles of life as
they arose. It did not completely
exempt man from the labour of thought
—he could not consult the priests about

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everything ; it did not govern conduct ; still, it went a long way. It does go a long way still with many people, especially women. To have a form of words said over them, or for them, by a priest does seem to exercise a soothing effect. They imagine themselves to be doing a good deal. But, generally speaking, every religion gets found out more or less. The esoteric teaching is found to consist of unintelligible words ; the high ideals to be unattainable, and, in fact, not to be high ideals at all ; the emptiness of the formulæ becomes patent and the tyranny of the priests becomes unbearable.

There is another way in which it can be seen that the test of religion is not conduct, but formulæ. Did any religion hold any true system of conduct, then its exponents and priests would be examples of it, and examples of life.

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But they are not. I am not in the least referring to "bad" priests, those who fall short of the rules of their Church; I am referring to good priests. A priest as a priest is not considered by the world at large as a model. Very much the contrary. Men say, and often do suppose, that priests serve some useful purpose, and are consequently necessary; they may suppose that occasional priests have certain admirable qualities which persist despite their priesthood, but that is all. Speaking generally, men despise priests as being something less than men. They have cut themselves off from mankind, and if they develop qualities to fulfil their special purpose they lose qualities that are to most men held in greater esteem. If they acquire "divinity" they have lost humanity. Very few fathers, I think, tell their sons to imitate priests. I am

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not only speaking of Western nations. That is universally true.

All the religions of the world have their heroes, but the heroes of the world are not Churchmen. Priests, even where accepted, are to most men a necessary evil, not a class to be imitated.

The test of a priest is not, and never was nor could be, his conduct. "Once a priest, always a priest," is one of the principal dogmas, not merely of Christian Churches, but of all the religions I am acquainted with. Once made a priest, or a Moulvie, or a Buddhist monk, and no matter what you do, your sacred status remains. A priest is no less a priest because he has committed a series of atrocious crimes. The absolution he gives you has exactly the same value. He is no less a representative of God for being a scoundrel. I wonder if religious people at large know this fact?

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Nothing could be more certain than it is. No Church, Christian or other, will deny it, nor could any Church exist on other terms. If conduct in certain matters is now demanded of priests, it is because the public insist on it, not because by the dogmas of the religion it is necessary. That is to say, it is advisable only, but not essential. Very often it is not even advisable. There have been periods in Church history where it was not, and even now—except perhaps in one matter—the standard demanded from priests is far lower than that demanded of the ordinary man. Charity of mind, truthfulness, fair-mindedness, are not demanded of priests, and very rarely rendered. Priestly authority is derived from a ceremony, and nothing else. This, as I have said, is true of all religions.

Thus, in a way, the world got what it

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wanted—a fixed code of ethics ; but it was simply an ethic of ceremony. There was nothing behind it. All the essentials to a true basis for a civilization are wanting in Christianity, as in all other religions. They have an impossible and unverifiable objective ; they are a despair of life. Thus they have no means of formulating any true system of conduct ; as a matter of fact, their only essentials in conduct are ceremonies.

When the very first principles of the Churches are that life is evil, to be endured and, if possible, denied, and that the process of the continuation of life, and therefore the continuation of life itself, is sin, where have you a base for an increasing civilization of life ? That is a negation of the first principle of any civilization—that the value and beauty of life lies in the living of it. There has never been, or could be, such

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a thing as a Christian civilization ; the terms are negations of each other. All our civilization has been gained in the face of religion. I need not labour this point ; it has been shown over and over again by many writers, and is proved every day by the acts of religions. Take the Church of England as an example, and look at its records. It supported slavery and the infamous penal laws. It has always opposed every approach to freedom, all extension of self-government, of secular education, of every single move towards a higher civilization and freedom. It must by its constitution do so, and has proved by its acts that it does so.

Remember, too, that no Church can reform ; Divine, that is absolute, truth was revealed to them, and they are bound by it. To reform would be to give up the whole matter.

CHAPTER V
CONCEPTIONS OF GOD

IN order, therefore, to build a civilization which will be true, and will not require to be continually destroyed by wars, we must find an objective in life here. No civilization can be founded on a view of the world which puts each man's objective elsewhere. We must understand life here and find our objective here, or we fail.

This at once raises a further difficulty. It will be asserted by a great number of people that though religion and priests may have proved themselves to be wrong in details, yet there is more than that. Beneath every religion there lies an idea of God, and, whatever else is false, this is a true idea. No consideration of life, no search for

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an objective, can succeed which ignores God, the Creator of the world. Let us, therefore, consider the point. And, first, what is meant by the word God. Let us have a clear definition of the word God.

I am aware that a great many people will say that this cannot be done; that God is immeasurable, indefinable and the rest, and that to attempt a definition is absurd. To them I would reply that I am not attempting to define God, if there be God, but to define the meaning of a word. What do religions mean when they say God? Have they a meaning? If so, what is it? If not, then God and Nothing, or Everything, are the same thing.

For instance, is God a block of stone, an image called Vishnu or the Madonna, bread and wine over which words have been said, lightning, accident, a priest

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of any kind? There are people who maintain all these things. Ordinary insurance policies, for instance, are not good for "Acts of God or the King's enemies." There "God" means accident. If you deny that the word "God" means any of these things, you have already begun to define; if you refuse a definition, you cannot deny that the flint on my table may be God.

If you say that God is defined in the dogmas of religions, I ask what dogmas? And if you say, for instance, that the creeds and other dogmas contain it, I reply that although they contain a number of words, they are all indeterminate words, such as Almighty, and are not definitions at all. No religion of any kind has ever tried to determine what God is, for the simple reason that the gods of religions are products of the imagination only. All that religions

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do is to declare that God has certain attributes, has performed certain acts, and will in the future do certain other acts.

Now in trying to attain a knowledge of any material, any individual, any energy, or, in fact, anything that exists, we proceed first by ascertaining what it does, what effect it has had and has now. From these we deduce the attributes, and frame, as far as possible, a definition which can never be quite correct, but which will divide light, say, from heat, or man from animal, or love from hate. Therefore, what has God done, what does He do, what is He going to do? These may give us an idea of what God is. Christianity states as follows :

God made the world, including man. He approved of His work when done. That approval was premature, as man

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turned out badly. He is born in sin. As there is no other way to be born and as the world cannot continue except by births, the whole scheme of life is sinful. God made it so.

God then drowned the world, all but a chosen few, but no improvement was manifest. How could there be, as the method of birth was not changed? Then God chose Abraham and his seed the Israelites. Abraham was an abandoned scoundrel, but God didn't care. He punished the Egyptians for not letting them go, although the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was God's own doing. Eventually the chosen people set up a kingdom. It developed no civilization, and, except under one strong man, no semblance of good government. It was always being destroyed owing to its being an intolerable neighbour. A chosen people cannot naturally be a

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pleasant neighbour to outsiders who, though equally created by God, are all destined to hell. Then God sent his only Son to save the world from its Creator's anger at his own failure. The Son was crucified. A new religion arose with his name, but the new religion is really the old under other terms. The chosen people are the Christian priests, and that is all the real change. The world is still evil, being as God created it. The world is not worth loving or improving. It is a vale of tears, to be denied as much as possible, and, finally, when we die we shall disappear, the minority to "heaven," the majority to eternal hell—to please God.

He cannot communicate with most men direct, but must have intermediaries, priests, visionaries and German Emperors.

And to prevent you forming an un

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favourable opinion of the Christian conception of God from His supposed acts, you are finally informed that He is Almighty, All-loving, All-merciful, All-wise, and that if you think that this is not apparent in His acts the fault is yours. You are trusting to the devil's gift of common sense.

But it is sometimes asserted that even if this particular idea of God is wrong, the belief in God is a true thing, and, therefore, if so far it has produced no civilization, it is necessary to civilization. It has a spontaneous and natural origin. It is part of man and man cannot divest himself of it. Therefore, it must be the basis of any civilization.

Let us see how far this is true.

There are two explanations usually given. Theologians of all creeds assert that a knowledge of God is innate in all people, and that its development depends

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on revelations, dreams, visions, and teachings by priests.

The scientific explanation is something as follows : Early man and savage man was not as we are. He did not think like we do, his mental processes being different, not merely in degree, but in kind. He had an Aryan or an Early or an Oriental mind, which acted in the most extraordinary way. No civilized or educated, or even modern man would imagine thunder to be a God, or the voice of God, mountains and streams and trees and boughs and charms to be God. But the savage did, and does so. Our ancestors did so, and hence arose our notions of God, which subsequently grew and expanded as our intelligence grew, until finally God became an abstraction in an imaginary heaven.

Let us, therefore, consider these two explanations.

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Theologians of all creeds and religions maintain that the belief in God is innate in all men. If by God is meant a power without the world, apart from the world, interfering occasionally but not often, sending revelations by priests and accessible to prayer, it may be quite confidently asserted that no man, civilized or uncivilized, has any such instinctive thought. What lies outside phenomena is unknown to all men, and man is too much concerned trying to understand phenomena to speculate about what he cannot possibly know. The natural man of all ages knows that there is something within phenomena, for he is conscious of this. He has frequently expressed this; in fact, all sacred books were in the beginning an expression of what he saw and felt. What is outside phenomena cannot be appreciated by the senses, and what is

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not evident to our senses does not exist for us. It must, therefore, be “believed in.” “Do you believe in God?” is a current question. Could anything be more absurd—or better evidence that the God of religions is purely imaginary? You don’t require to believe in real things. You see them.

In the beginning, the spirit of God, Zeus, Venus, Brahma, Vishnu, Odin, Thor, Osiris, Ormuzd and the others, were terms applied to things felt and appreciated by the makers of the sacred books. They were realities which could be observed and required no proof, whose attributes could be studied in actual life as they still can be. What these all mean comes in a later chapter; all I want now is to emphasize that they were realities and not the result of imagination.

The God of religion is quite different.

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He is outside the world, and cannot be appreciated by any of our senses. You cannot study him in the world because he isn't there. You have to believe what priests tell you, and you can in no way verify their tales.

Yet nothing can be more true than the statement that whatever does not affect us in some way through our senses does not exist for us. Even if He actually were somewhere in space, if He affected us in no way, if we could touch Him in no way, it would make no difference to us if He were not there at all.

Yet in the very phrase, "Do you believe in God?" this is conceded. We do not have to "believe" in realities, because we are sensible of their effect on us.

The idea seems to be "things seen." You can only see things with your senses, and

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God cannot *ex hypothesi* be appreciated by the senses; therefore, there is no idea of God possible. No man, civilized or uncivilized, ever had such an idea. As to "seeing with the eye of faith," men have eyes, but how can an abstraction like faith have one? It is only a play upon words.

No one ever had an idea of a God like this, and everyone knows that what he is told about God is not true.

Every one of our children resents at first as unnatural and unreasonable the tales priests or parents tell him about God. They jeer at it. They ask questions which probe its absurdity. All who are acquainted with children know this. But by dint of constant teaching, punishment and persuasion, they are forced to put their instinctive repulsion to this belief down into their subconsciousness, where, however, it always

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remains. Its belief is spread over the top.

This will become clearer later. I simply summarize it now that the reader may see the conclusions to which he will arrive in this matter.

Then we come to the "scientific" derivation of the conception of God.

This is even more absurd than that of the theologians.

I have myself lived most of my life in close intercourse, not with one savage or semi-civilized people, but with several totally different races in widely separated localities. I have become friendly with them, and have discussed all these matters, not once but hundreds of times, with them. I have done so with a complete absence of bias, because I did not want to support any particular thesis, but only to ascertain the absolute facts. I have learnt how to make these

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people speak freely and openly, which is a difficult acquirement. It needs a command of their languages, a complete confidence on their part, that you will never sneer nor laugh at what they tell you, and that you will never repeat their confidences to others. Further, they must be absolutely certain that you are only seeking for knowledge, and have no wish to convert them to anything. Otherwise, in their necessity they will protect themselves by saying all sorts of nonsense just like a civilized man will. And, therefore, from long experience I may assert confidently that there is no difference of kind between the way a savage thinks and the way an Oxford Don or a Heidelberg professor thinks. If it were declared that a savage man had a different kind of eyesight, touch, hearing, smell or taste, from civilized man, the absurdity would

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be manifest. If it were said that his methods of digestion and assimilation were different, everyone would laugh. Why, then, should his process of thought differ? Thought is only a mental digestion of food brought by the senses. The observation and mental digestion of a savage differs, indeed, in degree from that of civilized man, but not in the least in kind. In observation of certain facts he is better, in most other matters he is inferior. Both, also, are liable to the same mistakes, those of the civilized man being the bigger in size. There is no absurdity of reasoning a savage commits that you cannot equal in civilized man. Their perceptions and processes are absolutely the same. There is a wide difference in degree, but none in kind.

Therefore, if a civilized man never naturally personifies the elements, if

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he never sees God in the storm, the thunder, the waterfall, the mountain, neither could the savage.

As a matter of fact, he never does, nor has done. In all my experience I have never found any one who did not, when it was safe, laugh at such a statement. He has a perception of a First Cause in Nature, as I shall show later, but of a personal God in the elements, or using the elements as weapons, or a God outside in Heaven, he has no idea at all. When he personifies the elements, he does so for exactly the same reason that civilized man accepts the personal God of the religions—namely, because he has been made to believe it. That is to say, it has been dinned into him by authority from his childhood and although he knows it isn't true. This knowledge of its untruth has been driven down into his subconsciousness, and he

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is made to keep it there by belief enforced on him in childhood by authority. The following experience of mine will illustrate what I mean.

I was far away beyond the frontier amid mountains, wherein numerous wild tribes lived. I was reconnoitring for a path for troops, and I had with me as guide a man from one of the tribes.

We halted at the entrance of a valley at the further end of which some ten or fifteen miles away was a large village, and above it on the mountain side was a huge image in the rock. Apparently the image was partly natural, but it had been improved by art. I had heard of it before. I sat down on a stone, and after talking to my guide for a little about paths, fords and so on, I asked :

“ And that image—what is that ? ”

“ That,” he said, “ is our God.”

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“ Indeed ! ” I said. “ What does he do ? ”

“ He protects the village. ”

“ How do you know that ? ” I asked.

He stared at me and fumbled about in his mind a good deal, and then answered : “ The priests say so. ”

“ It seems to me, ” I answered, “ to be just stone. I don’t see how it could do anything. What do you think ? ”

He smiled, then pulled himself together. “ The priests say, ” he whispered, “ that it is a God, and will destroy the village or anyone who offends him. ”

“ How offended ? ” I asked.

“ He requires offerings, ” the man explained ; “ goats, money. If he doesn’t get these things he avenges himself. ”

“ What does he do with these things ? Eat them ? ”

I spoke taking the greatest care not to show any sarcasm or disbelief. I

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asked exactly in the same tone and with the same manner as just before I had been asking about fords and roads. I asked to acquire knowledge. My guide answered half in fear at talking about the deity, half in amused recognition of the hidden absurdity of his beliefs. No one was near enough to hear us.

“They say—the priests say—that God eats them,” he answered. “But the villagers whisper to each other that the priests eat them.”

“What do you think?”

He looked at me and shook his head. He wasn't going to express an opinion. It might be dangerous. People who offended the priests never lived long.

“What do you know about this God yourself?” I asked.

This time he was quite ready with his answer: “I don't know anything, of course. No one does except the priests

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They tell us all about God, and what he does and what he wants.”

“ How do they know ? ” I asked.

“ The God appears to them in visions and tells them. Also, they go up the mountain in stormy weather, and they say that the thunder is God’s voice and that they can understand it.”

“ There is lots of thunder,” I said, “ all over the world. Is it all the voice of God, or what ? ”

He only shook his head and laughed. It was perfectly clear that the idea of thunder being God’s voice amused him. No one, civilized or savage, but knows quite well that thunder is a natural phenomenon, and no one has ever instinctively deified it. That is a belief, not an idea.

“ Well,” I continued, “ the priests are told things by God.”

He nodded.

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“ And you believe ? ”

“ Of course we must,” he answered.

“ It seems to me,” I said presently, “ just like any other rock, only that it has been carved.”

“ Yes,” he assented. “ So it seems to us, too.”

Now that, *mutatis mutandis*, is a conversation I have had many times with many different kinds of uncivilized people about images, charms, rocks, natural forces, and other things worshipped as gods. Once I had acquired the art of getting them to talk naturally, I never found any difficulty nor any difference in what they said. It was a difficult art to acquire. If your witness imagines for a moment, either from the form of your questions, or your tone of voice, or even from your expression, that you are sneering at his beliefs, there is an end at once to all confidences. He will

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assert that all he believes is true. The more absurd it is, the more vehemently will he assert that it is true. For men—savage or civilized, there is no difference—only vehemently defend the obviously false. The obviously true needs no defence, and even if the truth be not obvious, but is, nevertheless, certain to a man, he sees little necessity to defend it. It is beliefs which, though he is committed to them, he knows have no sense in them, or are not true, that he so vigorously asserts. Falsehood requires defence ; truth does not.

It will be seen, then, that the beliefs that there are gods in natural objects or in elemental forces are forced on mankind. They are not ideas, that is to say, things perceived by any sense. They are contrary to all natural sense. That there is life of various degrees in all things, and that there is intelligence

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behind all living things, is quite a different matter. That can be perceived by the sense; but God, no! The priests who invent them, in the first place, know that they are not true, and the people do the same. Both force themselves to accept these beliefs, the priests because it suits them, the people because they are helpless. The people are blinded by beliefs so that they should not perceive the truth which is in them.

That is the way that the belief in God outside the world originated. It was invented by priests, and, like a poisonous mistletoe, it was grafted on to the universal idea of a First Cause within the world, which all of us can see when we look. To make a civilization here on earth we must see our First Cause here and our future here, and no religions do that.

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CHAPTER VI

THE PURPOSE OF EVOLUTION

IT will be seen, therefore, that we have been able to make no enduring and satisfactory civilization because we have never studied to see how alone such a civilization could be made. We have never had any true base to build on, and we have never had any knowledge of what sort of building we required. Our civilizations have been at best like that of Rome—empiricisms based on the past, with no knowledge of what is wanted in the future. They have never shown any understanding of life. Even the simplest and most obvious qualities of life were ignored by them as they are now. And if it be asked why for five or six thousand years no true study of life has ever

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been made, the answer is simple : because of religions. Even the civilizations of Athens and Rome could not progress, because behind them were religious theories about the world which were not only not true, but which prevented any real attempt to see the truth. For five thousand years at least children have been, from their birth, first educated to believe certain things about life and human nature which are not only not true, but which every man knows in his consciousness are not true. Yet these beliefs being there prevented any search for the truth. Even when in early days philosophers, and in later days scientific men, turned aside from religion, and tried to look life in the face, they were unable to do so. Their eyesight had been injured in youth, and between them and Nature there always floated phantasms of the beliefs impressed on them

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as children. You will see even to-day in a thousand ways the enormous hold that "religious" imaginings have on men who would, if asked, deny that they had any religious obsessions. For instance, the false teleologies of all religions have so affected scientific men that they will have nothing to do with any teleology. They have found out that all they have been taught is untrue, and they are driven to the other extreme. Yet life is in its essence teleological, as anyone who looks at it clearly will see.

Again, because they have come to see that the God of religions is not merely a phantom of the imagination, but of a very evil imagination, they have swung to the other extreme, and declared that there could be no First Cause in Life. Their minds are afraid of falling back into old beliefs, and

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either with their myopic eyes they cannot see what is before them, or they dare not acknowledge what they see for fear of supporting religion which they know is false. They, equally with the supporters of religion, remain the victims of false teleologies, although they deny they have any. While ecclesiastics look at the world with the purpose of seeing only what may help their religions, scientific men too often see only what will help them to upset religion. But you do not get at truth by either of these ways.

The inability of scientific men to shake themselves free from the influences of religion is nowhere more manifest than in discussing human nature.

It has, as I have already said, become recently a common-place of scientific men to suppose that there are a great many different ways of thinking,

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different minds. There is, for instance, the "Oriental mind" and the "Aryan mind." Scientific men will argue in this way. A Hindu, for instance, will worship Siva. But Siva means Death, and only a mind very different from the Occidental mind could worship Death whom we fear; therefore, Hindus have Oriental minds. But the true explanation is quite different. In early days men looking clearly upon the world saw that death was not in itself an aid, because, though terrible in itself, it was the only escape from something still more terrible. Without death there could be no youth and no progress. Without death the world would grow rapidly into an old age that would become clearly an everlasting death. Death is the return to youth, the forgetting of mistakes and cares, the new beginning which can be attained no

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other way. Therefore is death essential to life, because without death we should all voyage forward into an eternal Death. It is the great regenerative agent. That everyone can see for himself now as well as then.

But such an idea would not help priests, so they perverted it, and made Death or Siva into a destroying goddess, to be worshipped and propitiated through them with presents and offerings—the Thugs murdered in Siva's name; over the true idea was spread a false unnatural belief which is religion. But the scientific man could not see the true idea of death, and so he had to invent another explanation, which again he finds in his early religious teaching. He was taught as a boy that there were "chosen people"; as a man, he still clings to the belief, only in another form. The civilized man, of which he is the

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representative, has a "chosen" mind; the natural man has not.

Thus, quite as much as the churchman, the scientific man is apt to misread Nature, to mistake beliefs, besides being ready to adopt explanations that are imaginary. You will continually see this, and in the bitterness of scientific controversy you will see reproduced the bitterness of religious controversy, which can have no conclusion because neither is based on any clear view of life. When you come to the fundamentals underlying each, you find not understanding, but blindness, which, because it cannot see, must resort to belief. But beliefs are not part of human nature, they are false, unnatural things engrafted on a child's mind in youth, and very hard afterwards to shake off, although they are always known to have no foundation in fact.

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In a study of humanity this must always be borne in mind. A belief is no more part of humanity than a mistletoe is part of an oak tree. The naturalist who calmly discussed the mistletoe berries and leaves as part of the oak would be laughed at. But scientific men continually accept beliefs as part of human nature. Their own eyes have been so blinded in youth by other beliefs that they rarely see humanity truly.

Now this has been the case ever since before history. Beliefs about life have been hammered into children, till they, even though they knew they were not true, were blinded by them, and would not look truly at life to see it clearly and see it whole. They went either to the extreme of acceptance or refusal. They either accepted the religious accounts of the nature of the world,

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of God and of teleology, or they denied any teleology, or any purpose or First Cause at all, not because they would not see it, but because they daren't see it.

It is as foolish to deny or refuse to see the purpose in life, as scientific men do, as to attribute that purpose to some imaginary God, or Devil, or both, residing in some imaginary Heaven or Hell, as the Churches do. In either case, the cause is blindness, a blindness partly the result of education, partly wilful, and in either case the result is disastrous.

One basis of any civilization must be the looking forward to, and the helping forward of, a state of things that is in accordance with the purpose of evolution. Either to refuse to see this purpose, as scientific men do, or to place this purpose in some place in space, is

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simply to deny any base for civilization at all. It is a choice between a material chaos and a religious despair.

Life demands an objective in the future, and for a true theory of life and conduct that objective must be a true one, or the life you live in pursuing it will be a failure.

All civilizations have failed because they had no true objective, and because they had no true understanding of humanity and its necessities. They have been blind and they have ill-treated humanity. They have tried to bind it in rigid laws which had no true sanction, because they were framed either on generalizations from the past or imaginary revelations. But humanity will not be strangled to death like this, and so it has from time to time thrown off its fetters in sanguinary wars, internal and external. Without this we should

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have died long ago. Wars have saved us. To be able to do without war we must have a true civilization, and for that we must have as a beginning a true view of life and its purpose and a true view of humanity and its needs. We must see the world as it is, and ourselves as we are.

That is not difficult if you will put all beliefs out of your mind and look the world in the face. In fact up to a certain point it is quite simple and obvious to anyone who cares to look, who wishes to see life clearly and see it whole.

Look on the world about you and what do you see ?

You see an infinity of living things, plants, fish, insects, reptiles, birds, animals and man. The variety is so amazing and bewildering, and the detail so confusing, that no general idea is possible. You

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‘cannot see the wood for the trees.’ Retire, however, a little mentally, go up to some peak where the detail is too far off to be apparent, and you can see more clearly. It is a world of matter instinct with life.

Further, although when you are close to them, the life of a tree and the life of a man may seem utterly different from this distance, it is not so. The differences are those of elaboration and detail. Life in its essentials is one. There is a difference of degree, an enormous difference of degree, but not of kind. Looked at broadly and comprehensively, there is one great life animating and moving matter in myriads of different ways. Every living thing, from the lowliest fern to man, come into this description. They are matter instinct with life; when the organism dies the matter remains, but the life disappears.

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Again, every living thing begins in the same way. It originates as a tiny speck of protoplasm, which grows by accreting matter to itself and arranging that matter on a system of its own, and then occupying that extension with life. It grows to maturity and old age, the life departs, and the organism again breaks up.

Life is one, and the world is matter inhabited by life. This is true of all living things, and hence an apparent dualism—life and matter.

It will be understood, I hope, that nowhere as I go am I making decided and final statements about the nature of things. That we have to work out step by step and shall never completely know. I am not, for instance, now asserting that life and matter are two different things. I have, later on, much more to say about them. But in any view of the world,

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or, indeed, of the simplest thing in the world, you must begin at the beginning with the obvious. There can be no greater folly, though a common folly, than rejecting the obvious because it is not the whole truth. We must take what we see and then try what more we can see to modify our first view. To reject what we see because it may not be the whole truth is simply to stop dead. We must take our steps slowly but surely.

Life and matter, therefore, appear to be different things, because, though we know nothing of life apart from matter, we do know matter—a man's corpse—apart from the life which animated it. Viewing the world as a whole, you do not note the individual, but only the mass of animated nature wherein life is continuous, transforming and animating matter; but, nevertheless, they seem to be separable, or at least different.

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Let us take it for the present that they are different, and consider each as far as we can.

What does life consist of? Is it divisible?

It certainly is divisible. Life consists of emotions. Every activity of life is the exhibition of an emotion. There are a great many emotions. They are always in pairs, for the positive could not exist without the negative.

Take, for instance, the simplest form of life we know, the protoplasm of a seed, whether of plant or insect, fish or animal; what is its first sign of life? It attracts to itself food and absorbs it; that is to say, it grows. That is an elementary form of the emotion of love which is attraction and absorption. It does not, however, absorb everything about it, but only what it needs. The unsuitable material is rejected. That is hate, which is division from and rejec-

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tion. Again, as it grows it eliminates effete matter, and that again is hate. Both emotions are necessary to growth.

This is, of course, a very primitive condition of love and hate, which later become manifested in more complicated forms. More emotions, too, become manifest in action, and in the highest organism there are very many. Some of these are hope and fear, patience and revolt, sorrow and joy, sense of beauty and ugliness, harmony and discord, desire for change and fear of change, and many others, and as life grows higher, these emotions are keener and more varied.

Life, then, consists of emotions. What is the nature of an emotion ?

It is like the natural forces in that it is a-moral. Gravity draws down the stone tower whose foundations have given quite irrespective of whether it kills men standing below or not. The lightning strikes

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according to the laws that govern it, which are not concerned with any human right or wrong.

In the same way the emotions either are awakened and react to stimulus, like pity, or they slowly accumulate, like hunger or desire, till they can satisfy themselves with appropriate relief. In either case they are a-moral. A hungry man's appetite is not less excited by the appearance of food because the food may not be his to eat, and desire is not decreased by the fact that its only outlet may be "unlawful."

A man may restrain the satisfaction of emotions and so die partly or completely, but he cannot create or destroy an emotion at will. They exist independently of his will, and they are not subject to any morality.

All organisms are not only created and built up by emotions, but their only

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purpose is to give expression to the emotions. All phenomena of life are the exhibition of emotions. Everything you do or suffer is the result of one or many emotions.

Further, these emotions are universal and the same everywhere. There is no difference in kind between the love manifested by "flower feeling after flower" and male pursuing female. The manifestation takes different forms according to the organism in which it is exhibited, but it is the same emotion.

As an analogy to help you to see this take electricity. With the electricity laid on to your house you can light a lamp, turn a machine, cook a meal. It is the same electricity, and its manifestation is varied by the machine it passes through. Again, the electricity we have here and that they have in Russia, France, Australia are the same. The generating

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plant may differ; the quantity, the methods of manifestation and their efficiency may differ, and do differ, from place to place. But no one asserts that the electricity in one place or one lamp or one train is different from that elsewhere. Electricity is a thing in itself, like light, heat, and so on. We look at it in broad terms apart from its manifestation.

It is the same with the emotions. As we say that the energy in the world is composed of light, heat, electricity and others, so we can say that life is composed of the emotions. They are universal, impersonal and a-moral, just as are the energies. Living nature is matter built up into organisms and animated by emotions, and all life is the manifestation of emotion in matter.

Now, of course, this is not all that we can see at first sight even about life.

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The principal and controlling influence has as yet not been mentioned. But it will be more convenient, for the moment, to turn from life to matter and see what we can see in that. The phenomena of Nature are caused by emotions working in matter. What is matter ?

Let us begin at the beginning—that is to say, with that which is nearest to us, namely, our bodies—and see what they are composed of.

They are made up from the food we eat and the liquid we drink, together with what we absorb from the air. What we eat is the flesh of animals or plants, and what we drink besides water is the juice of plants. The flesh we eat was made out of plants, so that either in the first or second remove our flesh is made from plants and water. There may be a little mineral, such as salt.

But this flesh of plants was made

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by the plant out of either the remains of former plants, mould, or the detritus of rocks, and what is absorbed from the air.

So that eventually you get back to this—that all living matter is formed out of air, water and rocks. The rocks again can be analysed, and you finally come to this—that all the innumerable varieties of matter, living or dead, are composed of a very few elements. I say “finally,” because that is as far as we have proved; but there is, and there has always been, a conviction that when we really get back to the beginning, we shall find only one original form of matter, and that all the varieties we see were formed out of that.

How formed? What is there in matter besides matter that gives it so many different forms and qualities? It is life of some sort.

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For consider this to begin with. There is inherent in all matter whatever a force we call gravity. No matter is without it. And what is gravity but attraction, and attraction but love, the simplest form of love. Now love is an elementary form of life. It is not an energy, and has nothing in common with what we call energies. It is love, and that is what is inherent in all matter, and holds the world together. Were matter lifeless the world would dissipate itself through space in cosmic dust, and no progress be possible. All matter, therefore, is imbued with this elementary form of life, and it seems probable that every advance in variety of matter is caused by the addition to it of more life. Life—that is, emotion—is imprisoned to a greater or less extent in all matter, and the higher the matter the stronger the life. The qualities of steel, for instance,

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its sharpness, its ductility, are due to the kind of life that holds its particles together. Chalk was made by minute sea creatures, and can be made in no other way. Yet its components are universal. What could those things have put into their shells but life? And as you progress up the scale you see the evidence accumulate. Have you ever seen a salt crystallize? That is life of a sort; it is growth—of a lower degree than with the spore and the fern, but still life, acting on a known design. And time will not destroy or lessen this life. If, however, the salt be treated in a certain way by heat, it loses one part of its life. It can no longer crystallize. What becomes of the life the salt has lost? No one knows. It cannot be destroyed; nothing can be taken from, or added to, the universe. What, then, becomes of it? Well, try this next experiment, and

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see if it does not give you food for thought. I observed it once by accident, but have since repeated it many times. Sometimes it fails, I don't yet know why. I think because the coal was different.

Coal is, as we know, the fossil remains of forests composed, not of trees like ours, but of mosses, ferns, and other cryptogameous plants. The plants died millions of years ago.

Take a small quantity of suitable coal, and with paper and sticks build a small fire in a grate that has an overhanging fire-brick back, such as are common nowadays. The back should be clean and red. As soon as the fire begins to smoke, watch the firebrick back. You will see at first the smoke drift over it without catching. Then a particle of soot will catch, and suddenly from this centre a fern will grow. It grows very rapidly, and in appearance exactly like

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a creeping moss with leaves and joints. It sends out branches, it clings to the brick with roots, it creeps about the brick back, avoiding excrescences exactly as a fern does. Other neighbouring plants meet it; they overgrow each other, and in a short time the back is covered with what we call flocculent soot, but which is really composed of ferns grown up out of the refuse of the coal.

What is the explanation of this? The full explanation I don't know, but it looks as if the life imprisoned in the coal millions of years ago had been liberated by the fire, but again set to work to build up a semblance of its former shape from the only material available to it, the carbon in the smoke.

However that may be, it is life that builds up those soot ferns, life and nothing else.

There are innumerable other ways by

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which you can see that there is a sort of life in what we are accustomed to call lifeless matter. There is the effect that bromide of potassium has in slaekening and ammonia in accelerating the developing of a photographic plate. They have the same effect on the heart-beats. It is life that makes the heart beat ; what else can it be that makes the photographic image appear ? And, in fact, science has recently begun to admit what it knew, and forgot, many thousands of years ago—that there is no division between organic and inorganic matter.

All matter, therefore, owes its form and qualities to some kind of life within it. There seem to be infinite gradations of life, from the simplest known form, gravity, up to its most complicated form in man's organism.

But there is also another way in which the life that is in all things can be shown.

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Suppose there were no life in what we call dead matter—that is, in the rocks, the air, the water, the sun, the moon, in fact, in all and every part of our universe. Suppose it were, as it was commonly conceived to be, inert matter controlled by energies alone, could it exist? Certainly it could not. The invariable attributes of energy are that it acts equally all round, and that it dissipates itself. Energies alone could achieve nothing, even if we suppose they had been created in full force at some remote time or other. And they would have rapidly dissipated themselves, so that the world would be without energy, without heat or light or movement at all. Yet that is not so. Even what we call the inorganic world shows no sign of gradual death. After innumerable ages the sun still shines, the water flows, the seas are not stagnant. What keeps the energies

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from dissipation but life in some way we do not understand yet.

There are only two things that are eternal. The cosmic dust, out of which all matter was formed, and the innumerable grades and degrees and qualities of life that have built up this cosmic dust into the forms of matter as we see it.

As to energies, they are not eternal. They are continually being created, and they die very rapidly, dissipating themselves. What captures and reconcentrates them is life. An instance everyone can see of this is in coal, the same coal that I spoke of a while ago. When you burnt it the coal liberated heat. Where did this heat come from? The sun, millions of years ago. What was it captured and held that heat till now? The life in the plant. So it is with all things. They are instinct with life or they could not exist.

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Therefore, our first view that life and matter were two distinct things is now modified. Emotion and matter do not seem to be separable. In fact, matter depends for its existence, for its form and qualities, on the life that it contains. Therefore, our first generalization that life and matter are different seems to be too sweeping. That must not, however, blind us to what we observed first. Generally speaking, though life and matter are inseparable, yet there seem to be higher forms of life, or higher manifestations of life, that are separable. When a man is dead something has left his body. The emotions no longer function. Even granted that the capacity for function still remains in the body, something which instigated and controlled those functions, those emotions, has gone. That is plainly visible to our eyes. What then can it be ?

CHAPTER VII

THE PHENOMENA OF LIFE

LET us go back to what we discovered about life. We found that life consisted of emotion, that the whole form and functions of living things were the creation of, and the manifestations of, emotions. So far well.

But we also discovered some other things: that emotions were general forces, that emotions were unintelligent, and that every emotion has its complement. Now what results from this? Directly we come to consider these as attributes of the emotions, we see that emotions alone, working in matter, could not have produced the forms of life we see. Emotions themselves could, in fact, produce nothing. It is not only that they are a-moral, that is to say, with no intelligence

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and no objective, but they are contradictory. Every emotion has its equal and opposite. Were all the emotions released together, they would simply neutralize each other, and there would be no life. The phenomena of life result from the action and reaction of emotions towards a desired result. Love and hate, fear and joy, anger and sorrow, construction and destruction, and so on, produce the organisms and the phenomena of life by acting each in its appropriate place. They are unintelligent and react to stimuli, but the stimuli are not applied all together. There is, to a certain extent, a selection of the most appropriate at the time for the purpose required. This understanding of the object to be achieved and the means of achieving it is not an attribute of the emotions, and must come from elsewhere.

Again, take this consideration. The

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emotions, which are life, are general. Love in one place does not differ from love in another similar organism. Matter, too, is general. Between one cell and another there is no difference. Yet no living organism was, or is, ever exactly the same as another. No blade of grass is the same as another, no bird exactly like another bird, no man exactly like another man. What is this difference, this personality, due to? Every living thing has a personality of its own, differing, if even in a very slight degree, from all others. What causes this? Not the emotions which form life, nor the matter of which it is built, for they are general. There is an intelligence somewhere that does this. Take, for instance, the growth of a plant or an animal from the speck of protoplasm which is its origin; there is nothing haphazard nor mechanical about it. The germplasm knows exactly what

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it is about. It selects its food and builds it up into tissue on a scheme that is perfectly clear to it. It knows what it wants to achieve, and it does achieve it as far as it can. This can only be the result of intelligence. It will, of course, be understood that I am not speaking of our individual intelligence such as the humble intelligence which writes these words, or the, I hope, brighter intelligence which will not be content with my words, but will try to see the world as it is and judge it for itself.

We do not make ourselves. We each began to elaborate from a germplasm all this marvellous organism of our bodies long before we had any consciousness, much less intelligence. And when our intelligence did come, it still had but little to do with it. Our hearts beat, hunger comes, suitable food is demanded, eaten, digested, eliminated, with no help

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from our consciousness. We get hurt, and the skin heals, not by our intelligence ; we catch a microbe and our temperature rises to kill the intruder not by our design. We know nothing of how these things are done. Doctors can at best observe the stages of processes. They do not know how nor by what all these things are done. They cannot themselves do them. Not one glimpse of knowledge has come to us. We learn by observation that B follows A, and C follows B, but we don't know why. You can see, therefore, for yourself that in the growth and life, and even to the death of any living organism there is an intelligence manifested. And how great an intelligence. Have you looked at even the simplest living thing, a leaf, an insect, a feather, under a microscope, and seen the delicate beauty of the workmanship ? Look at the dust from a moth's wings, or the intricate mechanism

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of the human eye, or the shell of a sea-urchin. Even in simple construction, apart from the life in them, they so far excel even the finest human work as to belong to another category altogether. Their beauty, their delicacy, their adaptability to the purpose which they fulfil, is not comparable with anything we can do. The difference is too great.

And these things are living. They have organs which first make emotions as a dynamo does electricity, and then these emotions are turned on and off as is necessary to life. No unintelligent mechanism can do these things. Take the very finest mechanism man has invented, a loom, or a battleship, or a motor-car, and you see the difference at once. A machine, no matter what machine, simply repeats an action, simple or elaborate, over and over again. It cannot construct itself, cannot feed itself,

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cannot change to meet unforeseen emergencies, cannot cure itself, cannot mend itself, cannot produce children. Even for its limited capabilities it must be guided by intelligence. A ship must be steered and lubricated and fed. But living things can do all this, and most of it, the growth and nourishment and reproduction, they do with little or no aid from the active self, often in spite of it, simply by awaking the necessary emotions.

It is an intelligence that does these things, an intelligence so far above our own that we cannot comprehend it. That need not trouble us. We cannot comprehend our neighbour, for that matter, but we can learn a great deal about him by observing what he does and how he does it—and so with this intelligence; we can know a great deal about it if we like.

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Let us look back at the history of the world as we know it. I have, of course, no intention of recapitulating the main facts of evolution, so far as they are known, not very much. The reader is no doubt well aware of them. What I want to do is to draw attention to certain facts from which we may make deductions as to this intelligence that we see working in the world.

In the first place, the mere fact that there has been evolution shows that an intelligence caused it. The energies and the emotions are not teleological, nor is matter. Neither life nor the substance of which its organisms are built have any objective or purpose. Even if in some way they were set a-swinging, they would not progress, but would gradually fall back into immobility, into nothing. That there has been for millions of years a steady evolution towards a fixed ob-

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jective shows the control of intelligence. Chance can accomplish nothing, for chance always equalizes itself in the long run. If one chance propelled an atom one way the next would propel it a different way, until it had been equally propelled in all ways and so be at rest. But the phenomena of life have progressed, and only intelligence could cause that, intelligence which knew its purpose. And the intelligence is within the organisms. It could not from without have started an organism as a clock is wound up, and then left it, for even if it went at all, it would then only go as a machine does; but our organisms do more than this, they change and progress always. There is a mechanism of the body, of course, but the mechanism alone could not do this. A motor-car is a mechanism, but without a driver it could not adapt itself even to the simplest curve in a road. On

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the other hand, the driver would not accomplish much without the car.

This intelligence, then, is omnipresent in living things; in fact, it is what causes life. It keeps up, in some way that we have no idea of, that oscillation between extremes which is life. It is in life; it has always been in life; it is the cause of life and its maintenance. Did it withdraw itself, the world would disappear into dust. It is the only thing that is self-existent, because it alone creates form. Matter and the emotions are universal and amorphous; this intelligence works them into the forms it requires. Let us now see what more we can learn of it.

It is an intelligence infinitely beyond our conception, but apparently* it is not

* I say apparently because it certainly is apparent from the facts. But our view of facts and purposes is very limited.

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All Wise. As evolution shows, it has not always known how to progress upon its objective ; it has had to make experiments and find out by experience the way to go. It has tried this way and that till it found its method. It has taken millions of years to get the world as far as it is, and the world is yet a long way from being a complete success. Neither apparently is it All Mighty. Even when it saw the way, it had to find out how to build up the organisms it needed, and it did this by controlling the emotions. It seems to have no power in itself ; it performs no miracles, but it can in some way control the emotions, so that they within their laws obey it just as electricity within its laws obeys us. It cannot create either matter or emotions, it has to use what are ; but it finds them sufficient, and it finds their laws and limitations an advantage and not a drawback.

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But it has always had a clear perception of what it wanted to achieve, and a certainty of achieving it. Evolution did not proceed at random. Living organisms do not, as Darwin thought, vary in every direction, they vary towards one general direction, a little this side or that, trying which way is the easiest. And if you look at the course of evolution, you will see quite clearly what this general direction was. It was towards greater variety, greater freedom, finer, stronger and more varied emotions, towards organisms capable of being themselves inhabited by a second intelligence.

And here I will have to select another term for the intelligence working in the world, because I must have a distinction between this hidden, higher intelligence and the intellect of man, or confusion may arise. I have, however, to be careful about choosing a word that it should not

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be one that already has a meaning to the reader. If I, for instance, called this intelligence God, their thoughts would immediately fly off to heaven and hell and other imaginings. If I called it the First Cause, I would be again in danger of the reader giving it attributes he has already endowed these words with. I must choose a term that has not so far been degraded by ill-use. I will, therefore, call it the Atman, which is an Indian term, and in the Upanishads. It will be new to the reader, and therefore not liable to mislead.

The Atman, therefore, working through the emotions built up all living organisms, but it had no sooner brought the organisms a little way on their road, than it developed in them an intelligence of their own. How this was done we don't know, nor whether this brain intelligence, as I may call it, is really part of the

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Atman or separate. It appears at present to be quite a separate intelligence and of an inconceivably lower grade. It is really the ego. Nevertheless, it was necessary, or evolution could not have progressed. The vegetable seems to need little of it, but all fauna have it more or less pronounced.

Its position and powers are interesting. In the lower creatures it has control over the organism in which it lives, but only in certain ways, and it is obviously at first, as it should always be at any time, the servant of the organism. The organism says, "I am hungry; get me food," and the intelligence uses its power over the organism, makes the legs run, the eyes see, the hands collect, and so obey. The organism says, "I must continue my species; find a mate," and the intelligence again obeys. It has no other power over the organism than to use it to carry out its commands.

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Birds and animals are still in this state. They have intelligence, a very keen intelligence sometimes, and it is all subservient to the necessity of the organism and species. None of the animals or birds seem to be capable of independent thought directed towards altering or improving their condition. They seem quite contented and desirous of nothing more. Their intelligence is entirely the servant of the organism; that is to say, the Atman who controls it. Apparently their evolution has ceased. Since the appearance of man in any stage of civilization natural evolution among the flora and fauna seems to have stopped. As far as they are concerned, the Atman has gained its purpose. Such further evolution as has occurred has been the result of man's interference. He has seized on certain animals and plants, and cultivated them to serve his own needs. The

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result of his work has been an increase in size, with a decrease in intelligence and constitution. He wants a horse, for instance, to obey him and not to think for itself. It is to be a machine to carry him. A cow is to be a machine to produce calves and milk, a hen to produce eggs. All the necessary thinking is done by man, who provides food and shelter and protection. Plants and animals have, therefore, been degraded by him in every way except mechanical. When he ceases to care for them, they, if they do not disappear, revert to their original type, into greater intelligence. But they do not go beyond that.

Evolution towards the desired purpose has continued only in man, and it has gone some way. Directly we come to man, even to earliest man, we find a considerable increase in intelligence. He thinks not merely how to satisfy the call

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of the emotion, how to obey the Atman, but he thinks, or tries to think, for himself. He is discontented, which no wild animal ever is, and he wants progress. The purpose of the Atman, which in all lower life is hidden now, comes dimly into his upper intelligence. He becomes conscious of a distinct objective, not what it is, but that there is one. He becomes conscious very dimly of what to do and what not, which is his conscience. His intelligence does not understand these, but is aware of them. It is this that makes him, for instance, reject proverbs; his own poor intelligence makes them; the intrusion of the Atman into his consciousness makes him reject them.

For, fortunately his intelligence is still greatly subordinate to the Atman in the organism. He must still obey it in a great many ways, and its demands are always increasing. He must get it food,

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clothes, safety, change, a mate, a house, books, music, a motor-car if he can, and so on. All these are demands made, not by the intelligence, but by the organism. They are emotions, like hunger. Some, the most necessary to us, we have little or no control over, fortunately; others are more under our command. But still, generally speaking, even in the most developed races, some of the demands of the organism are imperative, and all are incentives to progress. They are really, of course, demands of the Atman.

Thus, you see, that although an intelligence has gradually dawned in man and increased, the Atman has not allowed it much power. The Atman still retains command and enforces its will. Whether we consciously will it or not, the Atman forces us still along the path of evolution towards the attainment of its purpose. Our organisms still continue to develop

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towards greater emotional power and greater possibility of intelligence, greater freedom, and consequently greater happiness.

This has been done by the Atman, not by us. It has been done by the Atman despite us, generally. As you will see in the later chapters, our civilizations made by our intelligence have been mainly intended to injure our organism, to denounce it as evil, and to strangle it as much as possible. Because no one would look at life to understand it. All civilizations have had as a base false views of life, false views of God, and so in the name of imaginary gods, the product of evil imaginings, they have denied and sought to thwart the true God, the Atman, who is so obvious in this world if we only look at it truly. Hence the necessity of wars to free us again.

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Now the value of the view of life given above lies in the fact that each man can see it for himself, and is, therefore, dependent on no priests or other teachers. It is the book of life itself.

But in case any reader may think at first sight that such a view of life is difficult and is new, I may say that it is neither. It is very simple and easy, so simple and easy, that many thousands of years ago, when men's intellects were not so developed as to-day, a great many people saw it. For instance, all the writers of what are called the sacred books of mankind, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Zendavesta, the Eddas, the legends in Genesis and many others.

And in later days, Laotze, Jesus, Mahommed, Averroes, Spinoza, Bacon, Shakespeare and Goethe, saw the world exactly in this way. Wordsworth, too, and Shelley, and, in fact, every great

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poet, has had glimpses of it—or he would not have been great.

Everyone who chooses can verify this for himself, and I need not prove it here. I will but give some quotations :

“ The Kingdom of Heaven is *within* you.”—*Jesus*.

“ God is the immanent idea.”—*Spinoza*.

“ He is present in the heart of all things.”—
Averroes.

“ The earth is the living garment of God.”—*Goethe*.

“ One impulse from a vernal wood
Will teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can.”—*Wordsworth*.

And if you will think over these quotations, you will see that what I say is true. They are a recognition of the Atman in matter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

NOW go back to our general view and what do we see? An intelligence that we call the Atman has gradually obtained more and more control over the earth, building it up into a newer and more complicated organism. The work has been done very slowly. Innumerable forms have been created, and when their usefulness had passed, allowed to disappear, only the higher organism remaining. How exactly this was effected we don't know. One method, and probably the most potent, was the struggle for existence—the fitter destroying the unfit. It seems as if the Atman took as its test of fitness, or one test of fitness, the power of an organism or genus, or species to maintain itself against

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others, and that if it could not do so, it was evidently unfit. That form was, therefore, abandoned and died out, and the intelligence and effort that had grown to it went into new forms, just as when a man discovers a better engine, or a more efficient lamp, he scraps the old. Nothing, of course, is lost. The energy and material go into the new and more efficient forms, and, further, even if the organism were in itself suitable, the constant struggle was necessary to keep it fit and increase its fitness, or it would soon deteriorate. So did evolution continue until man appeared; the unfit died and disappeared.

With man, however, a change came in. In the first place, man's nature differs from that of the lower animals in that he has an intelligence which, like that of the Atman, is dissatisfied with the present and seeks improvement in the future;

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and his evolution has differed so much that, as far as we can see, the struggle for existence between individuals and between races is composed of other considerations besides mere combatant ability. This is manifest in a hundred ways, but the particular point to emphasize is that combatant ability alone is no longer a test of fitness. As the nature of man is infinitely complicated and has great wants, any quality which ministers to a true want of his nature indicates a fitness quite apart from its ability to fight its way by force. Artists of all kinds are cases in point. Moreover, races do not usually tend to disappear entirely. I doubt if history records the disappearance of any type of mankind. Conquests, massacre, plagues, never seem to do more than thin out a race, which again revives.

It is extraordinary how races maintain

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themselves. I do not, of course, mean that they remain pure; probably no race has done that, but that the characteristics of a race settled in a certain locality continue against all persecution. Look at the turmoil in Europe, for twenty centuries, ever since it began to settle down after the waves of immigration and migration had passed over it, and how little effect this continual murder, and massacre, and conquest, and standardization has had. Danes, Dutch, Portuguese, Spaniards, and all the others, retain their nationalities subject to evolution.

It is the same in India. Invaders come and conquer, impose their civilization, and settle and become absorbed and disappear into the nation. Poles, though divided between Prussia, Austria and Russia, remain Poles; the Irish have remained Irish. It would seem as if each

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race had its place and its use in the world, and that no attempts to destroy it would succeed. That seems to be becoming true of the North American Indians. Nature—that is, the Atman—will maintain his variety.

The struggle has been, and is, not so much between races as between civilizations. What has succeeded has not been any race, but whichever race at the time had the best idea of life; and that as long as it held to that idea it did well, and when it abandoned it it failed. There has been no chosen people who were favourites, no matter what they did, and there has been no enduring civilization, because even where a nation was right at the time, its righteousness seems to have been accidental and soon passed into wrongness again. It had no true foundation for conduct, no test as to real right and wrong.

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I do not know that you could find a more striking instance of this mind-petrification and entire absence of any guide to right judgment than the discussions about the present war. Every nation engaged in it is profoundly convinced that it is right, and can, as it declares, prove its righteousness without difficulty. And yet, of course, there is no proof. We do not convince Germany, nor Germany convince us. The neutral nations remain neutral because they also are in doubt. All this is because in matters of war, as in all other matters, there is no standard whatever of right and wrong. Were there such a standard, those who broke it would be convinced of their error, and neutral nations would not remain neutral, but attach themselves to the right side. There is, however, no such standard, and so every nation strives for power or wealth or

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both ; that is their only test of right and wrong, and they are surprised that even when they attain their ends they are as unhappy as ever.

Now civilizations are made by man. They are a product of his intelligence. They are not products of the Atman at all. One would suppose that as soon as man began to see and think, and as soon as he perceived the inevitable purpose in life and the Atman in life, he would have set his intelligence to its end, grasp the purpose of the Atman, and so help the Atman towards his objective. He would realize how incredibly wiser than he the Atman was, and would endeavour to follow his objective ; he would also realize how incredibly more powerful than man the Atman was, and that any conflict between the two would be absurd, and could only result in disaster to mankind. He would strive to discover the

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Atman's will and assist it. And at first so he did apparently. There are hints in the old writings of free communities who certainly to some extent did understand the purpose of life and try to attain to it. But they perished very long ago, and the constant effort of mankind since then has been to build up civilizations which were a denial of the Atman and his purpose in the world.

Let us consider the two. What are the objectives pursued by the Atman as far as we can see, and what ends has civilization pursued ?

Now, of course, as to the first we know very little. The purpose of the Atman is, without doubt, much greater and wider than we can see. That need not trouble us. Let us see what we can see for the present, and when we can see that we shall be able, later, to see more.

What, then, has been the trend of

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evolution from the beginning? It has been towards the production of even more complicated organisms and more variety of organisms attaining even a greater emotional capacity and a greater intellectual capacity. This is not only manifested in evolution up to the appearance of man, but in the evolution of mankind itself. There has been a continual production of new types of men, by the mixture of people due to migration and to the influence of new sects and climates. The inhabitants of even a little island like ours tend naturally to differ, county and county, and even in divisions of countries. There is a great difference between a Northumbrian and an Essex man, between a man of Kent and a Cornishman. Each develops qualities of body and mind the other lacks. And so it is all over the world. Even within these divisions individuals differ more and

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more. The difference between one wild animal and another of the same species is small compared to the difference between individual man and man.

In the same way emotional power is seen to increase steadily, and with it brain-power and ability, for the two are intimately connected. Early man was, by his weakness, much under the domination of the natural forces, but with increased ability he has acquired dominion over them, and, therefore, greater freedom from hunger, danger and disease and death.

With the increase of his brain he has also acquired the capacity for greater freedom, because he is more capable of judging for himself. He has also acquired ability to feed his emotions, the higher as well as the lower, his love of beauty as well as his desire for food and children. His emotions, whilst becoming keener,

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have become more varied and more complicated.

Love, for instance, which first is shown as physical attraction alone, afterwards, while retaining this as the necessary base, adds thereto innumerable finer complementary emotions. All these emotions tend to the increase and variety of life and they must be satisfied, in reason, or atrophy.

Further, in every race and every individual the emotions differ. There are no two races alike, nor any two individuals absolutely alike in their emotional needs. There is variety again.

If you will look at mankind as far as we can understand it, from the histories of, say, three thousand years ago, and the state of mankind now, you will see very closely the process of evolution and the great progress that has been made towards these three objectives. There

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can be no doubt that variety, freedom and ability, are three of the objectives pursued by the Atman. And if you wonder why it should be these three, the answer is, simply, that these constitute happiness. To be able to see the right thing to do for yourself, to have the freedom to attempt it, to have the ability to succeed more or less in your endeavour, because you have a nature so emotional and yet so under control as to give you power, do constitute happiness. There is no other definition of happiness that will stand compared with this.

Further, continual variety and change are necessary to happiness, because did mankind become standardized, all novelty in life would be lost for all of us. If every man was the same as every other man and every woman the same as every other woman, we should have fallen to the level of automata, and

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all necessity for judgment would be gone.

Further, it is manifest in this evolution that though it is, looking at it in one sense, a continual fight wherein every man is enemy to every other man, the opposite is equally true—that every man is necessary to every other man.

This is true also of the lower animals and of plant life. The victory of one plant over the rest of the vegetation would be disastrous to the victor himself; if carnivorous animals destroyed all the species on which they prey, they, too, would die; and were all carnivorous beasts destroyed, the species on which they used to prey would deteriorate owing to want of impulse to effort. Each and every living thing is at once the enemy and the friend of all others.

To return to our simile of a cricket match, our opponents are also our friends.

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It is as necessary for your happiness as theirs that they play well and are happy. We want a worthy opponent, or the game is not worth playing.

Such are the objectives of the Atman, to increase our happiness by increasing our ability, our variety and our freedom.

What has the intellect of man in his civilization sought to do? I know of no civilization that has even theoretically pursued any one of them, let alone all three; and yet you cannot have one without the other two. I know of no teacher of civilization, of no kings, nor statesmen, nor religions, that have ever seen the necessity for them. Civilization has sought after very different things.

Let us take the civilization of Athens. What were the ruling principles of its short brillianey? Well, in the beginning a certain liberty was one of them, as it has been of every state that has succeeded

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at all. But it was only political liberty—that is to say, liberty to frame their own constitution—and it was a liberty that extended only to part of the population, many of whom were slaves. And having attained the political liberty, they used it not to enable freedom to increase and extend to all men and in all things, but they framed a new slavery of laws and religious observances for themselves, and a political slavery for their neighbours.

They, like all nations since, found life subject to their laws and conventions too narrow for their natures, and so they sought relief in war and in the subjection of other peoples. They cramped individual freedom in order to support the State, and they used the strength of the State, not in increasing liberty and variety abroad, but in reducing free cities to be vassal states, and trying to standardize them after the Athenian model.

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They disliked free thought at home, and so destroyed Socrates, the wisest of their philosophers, and they drove Alcibiades into rebellion because he had neglected some religious rite. So they fell.

The history of Rome and her civilization has already been mentioned. There very similar things happened. Her first and, indeed, main principle was the rule of the Senate over Rome, and the rule of Rome over the world. If she could, she would never have allowed the people any power or voice, because, as she said, they were too ignorant to have a voice. Therefore, they must remain in subjection. The idea of educating the people to take an intelligent interest in the State never occurred to them. Had it occurred to them, they would have rejected it. The desire of the Senate was not freedom, nor variety, nor intelligence, but power. They thought power gave happiness, and found

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it does not. They extended their rule out of sheer despair of finding any other way of moving their energies, and when nothing remained to conquer, they were in despair. Their empire flourished at first, because the Roman rule gave to the conquered a personal freedom their own debased tyrannies did not give. But that was merely temporary. Rome tried to standardize the world, to kill variety and freedom and all intelligence and views of life save its own, and fell.

Take, again, the French Revolution. It was a revolt from the deadly slaveries of king, nobles and priests, who stilted and destroyed the country. Its principles were Liberty and Equality, Fraternity, good things in themselves, but not the true objective. You cannot have freedom without the intelligence to rightly use that freedom, and the intelligence was

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wanting. It was wanting even in the leaders who had so little idea at all of the needs of humanity ; it was still more wanting in the mass. You cannot take a people educated in slavery and give it freedom at once, because, not knowing how to use that freedom, it simply achieves anarchy, as France did.

Fraternity is true, and is an admirable sentiment in place, but it must be reciprocal and have some meaning and objective. The French soon found that the Austrians' idea of fraternity with France was to subject it. Now you can't have fraternity with people who are pursuing aims disastrous to you.

And what is equality ? There is a true equality. Did the French know wherein it consisted ? Is it equality, for instance, to allow, as they did at one time, any mob of ignorant people to rule the State ? Therefore, the French Revolution in great

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part failed. It welcomed Napoleon as its master, and he, with France, sought to enslave the world. He had exactly the same motives that every other people have had in grasping for power, because he saw no other way of employing his energies. Life at home was too dull, flat, and unprofitable to be worth living.

And our civilizations of to-day, what objectives have they? Peace and wealth are all that I have ever heard of. Freedom is quite forgotten. The aim of all civilizations I know is to bind men more and more in laws and conventions, and so reduce freedom as much as possible. All the great resources of our material progress and of our organization are devoted to the imposition of absolute rules of life, to the standardization of humanity. Take a few instances at random. A hundred years ago each locality had its own speech and its own

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dress. The dialect was good because pithy and expressive of the ideas of the people; the dress was distinctive and picturesque. Nowadays all this is swept away. Speech and dress is standardized and so becomes representative of nothing. It will be understood that I do not mean that old-fashioned dresses and dialects should have been preserved, but that they should have been allowed to evolve in their own way. But they have been killed.

Intellect, too, has been standardized as much as possible by the system of education; all originality has been killed. It is as much as a man's reputation and happiness are worth to disagree with accepted shibboleths.

The relative life of the sexes has been standardized. Every man or woman must either accept one of the other sex for life, an impossibility to many natures

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of men and women, or entirely remain without any of the stimulus of sex attractions. And because even so nature cannot be standardized, illegitimate children are denied every consideration as human beings, and so are often driven into crime and nearly always into despair.

The tendency is the same as regards alcohol. Because a few abuse it, generally owing simply to the want of any other and better emotional stimulant, the majority who know when to use and when to refrain are punished and harried towards a forced abstinence. The education of the individual to enable and help him to make what his constitution finds to be a right and proper use of alcohol is never thought of, never has been thought of. Freedom is the last thought of every modern civilization. Its cry is always prohibition, punishment, force, standardization, until life is unendurable.

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The ideal of all civilizations has been wealth and power, and the methods of all civilization that we have known have been the same that underlies a prison or a reformatory. Human nature is weak if not evil, and the only way to manage it is to withdraw its freedom as much as possible, and keep it in servitude to castes or classes or "leaders," who rule it according to fixed laws which the whole people must obey. The strongest instance of this in modern life is Germany, where each and all of the people must be born, be educated, be doctored, be insured, light their fires, be married, order their households, die and be buried, on fixed and absolute lines. But although German Kultur has carried out this ideal with more method than elsewhere, the principles are the same everywhere. All civilizations are a denial of freedom, variety, and intelligence, and so little do

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people know what objective to aim at, that, when they revolt against tyrannies, their one thought is not to aim at freedom, but to substitute a new tyranny for the old one. Thus an autocracy is replaced by an aristocracy, that by a bourgeoisie, that by an ochlocracy, and then generally *da capo*. Women dissatisfied, and rightly dissatisfied, with their position and the relationship of the sexes, never think of studying what it really is they desire and that their sex fits them for; never consider in what their happiness may lie, but strive to replace what they call man's tyranny over women by women's tyranny over men. They think, as do all people, that progress is to be obtained by changing masters, by still more abridging freedom and denying nature. And people think this because all their education makes them think it. From the time they are babies they are taught

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to despise life, to obey not because a reasonable obedience is good for themselves, but because obedience is a duty. They are taught to have fixed principles on all matters which they must never change, or they will become unprincipled. A child educated as a Radical, Tory, Home Ruler, Ulsterman, or the rest, must so remain till he die. To allow your mind to remain open is a crime. It must be shut, banged and barred, or you will be a traitor and be ostracized.

From children all classes above the lowest have it dinned into them that to be respectable they must have certain prejudices. Their minds must be atrophied, so that in most matters the only people who really retain free will to form their own opinions and adapt them to circumstances are the uneducated, who rule the state by fluctuating from side to side as they think their

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interest demands. They keep the state alive, otherwise it would be a petrification. And unfortunately their power is small; it is only to choose between Codlin and Short. Now less than ever are freedom, intelligence, variety cultivated, and so nature revolts into the most terrible war ever known. It is the only relief.

Man does not attain happiness because he does not pursue happiness; he pursues slavery and misery, and naturally attains it.

CHAPTER IX

THE OBJECTIVES OF CIVILIZATION

IF, therefore, we are to do without war, we must have civilizations that are in accordance with the demands of our natures, that do not cramp them nor deny them, but which work gradually and wisely towards the same end as evolution does : greater intelligence, greater freedom and greater variety. They must be civilizations which, within just and proper limits, allow us to develop our faculties and all our emotions, not nationally only, but individually. Our objective must not be power, nor wealth, but happiness ; and, as I have already said, happiness whether of the individual or the nation, consists in ever-increasing emotional capacity, which is power, and of intelligence and freedom to rightly use the particular qualities with which we

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are born. These alone are happiness, these alone are righteousness, because in accordance with the will of the Atman ; these alone can succeed.

How very far we are from any such civilization.

For consider : what objectives have our civilizations ever had ? I think you will find it hard to show that, taking the people as a whole, there ever was a clearly defined and permanent objective at all. There have been temporary objectives usually connected with war. The objective of France for the last forty years has been to make herself strong enough to defend herself against Germany ; the objective of Germany has been to so strengthen herself as to be able to grasp at universal empire. The aim of Italy has been to consolidate herself into a nation and make conquests in Africa. The aim of Great Britain a hundred years ago was to fight France

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and acquire empire, then to recover from the strain, and for the last eighty years simply to have peace and wax rich. If you will look to the various reports and estimates of our Colonies and of other countries, their prosperity and happiness has been gauged by their trade, their exports, and imports, and so on. Even social legislation is always directed to the same point—money, and any and every bond placed on freedom has been considered justified if it resulted in a little extra money. The deadly industrialism of so many countries, which is, in fact, for many of the workers a complete slavery, is justified as necessary to the production of wealth. And religion in its place assisted this procedure by telling the workers that this life was but a passing show, and if they submitted patiently to the yokes of industrialism and the churches they would be all right when they were dead.

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That material comfort, even could it be obtained, would not bring happiness was ignored, and it cannot be so obtained. A rise in the material condition of all can only be obtained through freedom for all and happiness for all. The wealth that has been accumulated has been that of a few, and destitution has increased, not decreased. The bulk of the nation is cramped in all its development.

A very strong instance of this is seen at this very moment as regards recruiting for the war.

There are inherent in our childhood's nature, when it is born, two very notable qualities: the delight in fighting for a good cause, and the intense joy of self-sacrifice for a good cause; that is to say, a cause the individual himself or herself sees is good.

At the present moment our national existence is at stake, the inviolability of our country, our homes; there is a

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deadly threat to our freedom. In such a case the normal young man, he in whom these emotions had not been destroyed, would not have to be asked to join the colours, but would have to be forcibly kept away from them lest the country be drained of men. He would delight in such an opportunity of exercising the two emotions which cause the greatest pleasure. Government would have to reject and expel, not urge. It would make a favour of taking a man.

But what has happened? Well, perhaps one-fifth of the young men who have answered are more or less normal in this particular, and the rest are not, so that they have to be more or less forced to volunteer. It is necessary to replace the stifled emotion by urging or even forcing men into the ranks, because their nature has been so dwarfed and cramped by our civilization that the emotional power within them is wanting. And they are

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blamed, whereas the blame is not with them at all, but with the civilization which made them what they are.

But it must not be supposed that we are worse than most nations in this way ; probably we are much better, and that no other country could have shown such a proportion.

So as a nation at war do we pay bitterly for our civilization.

Again, consider another point.

As far as we are concerned, what brought us into the present war ? And, being in it, what makes our difficulty in ending it satisfactorily and rapidly with the minimum of suffering ? Our unpreparedness for war. And what was the cause of that ?

It certainly was not that most of the statesmen on both sides, and, indeed, the greater bulk of the richer classes did not know of the danger that threatened us. That has been a commonplace for many

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years, and even the occasional denials did not sound more than half-hearted. It was that the nation could not be brought to face the truth, and that statesmen on both sides, though aware of our great danger, dare not prepare for it because the country would have refused the means. We all know that.

And why would the country at large refuse the means to maintain its freedom? Partly because to the great masses of the people it did not seem that there was any freedom to protect, partly because they were too stupid to see the danger, and partly because they were afraid that such a state of preparedness as would ensure our protection against Germany would mean our surrender of what freedom we had to a militarism that might rival or exceed that of Germany itself. And, in fact, these fears and thoughts were not imaginary, but real. Our civilization has never aimed at freedom, nor does it now.

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We have seen in England in the last century a great many changes, but they have been mainly changes in masters and methods—not approaches to freedom. Would anyone say that the ordinary working man to-day was more free than a hundred years ago? Then he was subject to an aristocracy, now he is subject to an iron industrial system. Materially he has benefited by the advances of science, but in freedom to develop in his own way he has not advanced. Maybe he has retrograded. Think of how the bulk of the people live in rows on rows of dwellings all the same pattern, doing every day the same monotonous work, with the same monotonous amusements, bound in every direction by laws and conventions. Think of their drab, grey lives, without any outlook at all towards freedom. And as bad are the lives of the middle classes and all but the very rich. What pleasure have the

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bulk of the people in life to make it worth defending at heavy cost? Power was theoretically descending to the working classes, but it was in theory only. They could change their masters, they could not change their lives; and whichever master they took promised them only more money or more power, not more freedom nor more happiness. They had no real control over the State. Whatever party they put in power made little difference to them; there was only an increase of laws and prohibitions. Why should they surrender what little freedom they had left in order to rivet about their necks a militarism which, however it might protect them against one slavery, did so at the price of another?

True, the foreign danger might be the worse, but they had not been so educated as to be able to appreciate this foreign danger, its severity or its imminence. The talk of danger might be merely

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blague to get them to agree to a militarism which would be a slavery. It was so in Germany.

So they would not agree, and the party who had suggested any great extension of military service would have disappeared at the polls. They all knew that. A proper military preparation could have only proceeded from a people which was absolutely convinced of its necessity, which had a freedom and a prospect of ever increasing freedom worth defending, and which was absolutely sure that a great army so created would never be used to abridge its home freedom, or lead it into adventures abroad of which it did not approve.

But none of these conditions existed, because our civilization has never pursued these ideals.

And even now, when we are involved in a war for existence, only a small part of the nation is capable of realizing it or

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willing to suffer to maintain its freedom. The onus is thrown upon a comparatively small section—a section that embraces all classes, be it said—who, unless compulsion be resorted to, must fight for the whole country.

And the same is to be said about all countries. There is in no country in the world such a condition of freedom and intelligence that the universal manhood will intelligently see danger coming, will prepare for it voluntarily and gladly, certain that the preparation and readiness will increase its home freedom and not abridge it.

Take another case in point, the Irish Question, in abeyance just now, but which will have to be settled some time or another by civil war or otherwise. What is the difficulty ?

Well, the difficulty is this, that Great Britain ruled Ireland for some hundreds of years, and spent all that time trying

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to turn Irishmen into English and Protestants. They were bullied, harried, persecuted, to become what they could not possibly become, people of another race, so now they demand to rule themselves and the majority of Great Britain agrees, but Ulster objects.

And what is Ulster's objection? It is this: that whereas when England ruled Ireland it tried to turn the Irish into English, now that the Irish are to have Home Rule, they will try and turn Ulstermen by force into Irishmen and Catholics.

It is probable that they are mistaken, but how can you convince them they are wrong? What are the principles of all governments? To make the people fitter for freedom and to give it them as they become fit? Not at all. The object of all governments and all educated classes has been to establish tyrannies, to standardize men as much as possible, to turn them all out of the same mould, to stifle

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freedom. They do this on the pretext of civilization, because civilization has never meant freedom. They never study human life in order to understand it and develop it; they never try to understand wherein happiness consists and pursue it. They take as an axiom that human nature is evil; they then retire into their inner consciousness and imagine a "perfect man," and having done this, they use every power they have to reduce humanity to that standard. And because freedom revolts they try to reduce freedom as much as possible, especially by education, so that no man should think for himself but blindly and dumbly accept them as masters. The world grows more unhappy and restless in consequence, and the remedy is always more and more coercion. That is the ideal of all classes from the highest to the lowest, from the hereditary legislator to the socialist and syndicalist.

It is exactly the same thing with the

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social trouble and the sex trouble. They all arise from a lack of freedom and a lack of intelligence, and the cure proposed is less freedom than there is now and less intelligence. In fact, all the ideas that people have in the face of trouble is to change masters and still further reduce freedom. A country, a class, a sex, is discontented. What is the proposed cure? Freedom for each sex, class or country, to manage its own affairs, and wider freedom for individuals in each, a wider understanding of differences? Not in the least. "Change the governing class and make the laws more stringent yet," is the cry. Socialism is the "cure" to aristocracy, and to hand over the government to women the "cure" of the sex trouble. "Human nature is evil; repress it," is the motto of modern civilizations even more than of old ones. Can you wonder, then, that human nature revolts in wars?

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If, then, we are to avoid war, we must therefore make new civilizations, whose objective is the same as that of evolution, namely, an ever-increasing freedom, variety and intelligence, not in or for a class or classes, but for everyone and for all humanity. Everyone has an equal right to this, and it is for the benefit of the whole that no part of the nation, no individual even in the nation, nor in any other nation, should be deprived of his just development, and his proper freedom. A nation, like a human body, is one organism, and if only one cell out of the myriads in our body be diseased, the whole suffers. Now all nations are part of humanity. The objective is simple and desirable, and as we shall never fully accomplish it, our pleasure and happiness will lie in using all our efforts to continually approach it.

And when men see that their government and their civilization really have

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this in view, and try to realize it, then they will suffer much in patience, because there is always hope for the future. Now there is no hope. I don't think there could ever have been such a marked degree of despondency in the world as there was before this war. From the millionaire down, everyone said, and said truly, that life was not worth living, that there was no prospect and no hope. And now that the war has come, they console themselves by saying, "The war will change all that." But the war will change nothing. War is destructive only. It will create nothing. It can at best give an opportunity for a fresh start. But if hereafter, as always before, civilization and government pursue the same objectives, how has the war helped us? Not in the least.

CHAPTER X

A "GREATER FREEDOM."

THEREFORE, we have found our true objective. But what of the methods we are to employ to realize it? For, as we have already seen, the choice of a true objective is but one step towards a true civilization. The value of life lies not so much in the approach to the objective as the life we live in approaching. What are the rules?

Well, as we have seen, there can be no fixed rules. There is no Absolute. There are now innumerable difficulties in the way, and as time goes on, and we more or less overcome these difficulties new ones will arise. The value and pleasure of life lies in meeting these difficulties, and the increase of intelligence could not take place without these difficulties to

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stimulate it. We shall never be able to lay down our arms and say, "There! we have achieved all we want," or "Now we know exactly how to act," because life then would lose all its savour. We shall always have to use our judgment.

But there are, nevertheless, certain rules that seem to be nearly, if not quite, fixed. The value of life lies in the living, and anything that tends to deteriorate life, even if it seems to lead in the right direction, is wrong. I have already illustrated this by reference to a game; let us take a present case.

Germany began this war by attacking Belgium, and there was no grievance that Germany had against Belgium to give any sort of excuse for this. She has herself admitted this. Take it even that Germany had an excuse for attacking France—she had no excuse for attacking Belgium. She had no quarrel with Bel-

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gium, she incurred no danger from Belgium, and the civilization of Belgium was as high as hers. Therefore, her attack on Belgium was a piece of gratuitous wickedness. It deteriorated national life, and therefore it could not help in the defeat of France, but would stop it. And, in fact, that has been the case. No one doubts that Germany would have had a better chance if she had attacked the French frontier directly. She has lost, and though, as her aim was not a true aim but a wrong one, she was bound to fail in the end in any case, the penalty now will be to her the greater and more costly.

You cannot attain a good end by wrong means. If the only means of attaining an end be wrong, then the end is wrong. That seems to be inherent in life.

The question is, What is wrong ?

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Now, as we have seen in Chapter II. there is no fixed code of right and wrong, there is no Absolute in conduct. We cannot lay down for the Absolute that we must never tell an untruth, never use force, or any other strict code. There are times when all these are justified and right, and the question is what makes justification. We all know that these things are wrong in themselves; how can they become right?

Well, the only test we have ever found is in our consciences. We know instinctively sometimes the right and wrong of these things. Our nature tells us. And as it is better that we should help our instincts with our reason than fight against them, let us see if we cannot detect the test our conscience uses.

I think we can, and I take it to be this. Every evil thing is evil, but it is justifiable when it prevents a greater evil, or does a

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good that is greater than the evil of the act.

Now see whether this definition does not explain our examples. Take the case of Kant, quoted in a previous chapter, where a man sees a fugitive hide himself, and, being questioned by the would-be murderer, tells an untruth. The untruth was evil, but there was no way of preventing the murder save by an untruth; therefore, the untruth was justified. Take another case. Where is it justifiable to kill a man—not in war? To kill is evil; when can it be justified? Only when it prevents a greater evil, when it is the only way to prevent the death, or injury almost equivalent to death, of an innocent person or persons.

When, then, is war justified? War is a horrible thing; when can it be justified? What is there more horrible than war? Only one thing—slavery. War, then, is

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only justifiable when it is the only way to freedom for one or both. Freedom is the test, always the test, because it is the end towards which nature strives.

But even here we have arrived at no Absolute because we have no absolute definition of freedom; that also being a relative and not an absolute state. For there are two sorts of freedom, that of the state and that of the individual, and they are not always identical.

Take, for instance, the Soudan under the Mahdi. The State was free, but the Mahdi's rule meant slavery to everyone who was under it. The condition of the Soudanese was terrible. While the State was free the individual was not.

Now in the ultimate resort the freedom of the individual is the higher. A State and a Government exists not for itself, but for its people, to give them an ever-increasing freedom. And if it does not

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do this, but the reverse, and if a change to an increased freedom can only come of foreign rule, then foreign aggression is justified in the cause of that humanity of which we are all a part. Foreign rule is justified as long as it means progress towards freedom, so long and no longer.

But, again, we must be careful what meaning we put to the word "freedom." It does not mean anarchy. It does not mean an unlimited liberty to do wrong to our neighbours, because that abridges our neighbours' freedom. You cannot, therefore, divide freedom from intelligence. Freedom can only increase as intelligence increases, because without intelligence freedom becomes anarchy.

On the other side, it is equally true that, without freedom, intelligence cannot increase, for one is dependent on the other. Nay, even more; they are really one, in this way, that freedom means

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freedom to do the right thing, and intelligence includes freedom to think the right thing, to discover it for yourself and to know that it is true. And both freedom and intelligence are dependent on a limited liberty to do the wrong thing, because unless you practise your intelligence it will atrophy, and because no one is exactly the same as another man.

But, again, the temporary must not be mistaken for the permanent. It does not follow that because our ultimate aim is freedom, that therefore every step must be a direct approach to freedom or be wrong. That would again be to create an absolute which cannot exist. To attain a greater ultimate freedom we may at times have to submit to a temporary decrease of freedom, because we had abused the freedom we had owing to want of intelligence and ability.

Take the case of Russia and vodka, the

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government sale of which has now been prohibited. If this prohibition be intended to be a permanent dragooning of the people into an enforced, not temperance, but abstinence, it can but do evil and fail, because it is a form of slavery. It will be evaded wholesale, and the latter end of Russia will be worse than at present. If, however, the argument is as follows, it is different: " The Russian peasant leads a very dull life in which amusement or emotion has no part. The only resource he has had to forget the present and stimulate himself has been vodka. It has been very cheap, and so he has acquired a custom of drunkenness which stands in the way of all improvement. In order to progress, we must first stop his drunkenness, and there is no way to do this except by prohibition. But this prohibition is only temporary. We intend so to improve his life, that

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he will find it worth living ; he will have other emotional stimulants ; he will be educated in the habit of judgment and self-control. And as we succeed in this we shall gradually withdraw the prohibition of alcohol, because he can be trusted to discover, each for himself, what, if any, he may use rightly and properly, and to refrain from all misuse." Then the prohibition would be a step towards greater liberty, and not merely a substitution of a slavery of forced abstinence in place of a slavery of excess. It would succeed, because the majority of the people would see its wisdom, and that though a step backward from freedom, it was from a misused freedom, and that it was the only way to a greater freedom.

And this principle is true of all laws and restrictions, they should be but steps to a greater freedom.

CHAPTER XI

THE PREVENTION OF WAR

I DO not know that there is much more to say. It was not intended in this book to do more than show the nature, the cause and the prevention of war, and this has been done. War is destruction; its cause is the poison in all civilization we have as yet known, and its cure is a true civilization not merely of one nation, but of all nations. A fuller discussion of the guide to conduct shown here and the effect of its recognition on all natural and social life would be without the scope of a book on war. We are in the midst of war, and war must end before we can do anything else. It is no use trying to rebuild or consider how to rebuild until destruction has ceased, and we do not yet know how far

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destruction will go. It may not end with the signing of peace with Germany.

But there is one more point I would like to emphasize. The tendency of evolution is, as I have shown, towards ever greater variety, freedom and intelligence; and nature—that is, the Atman who made and is in nature—will have his way. Right is Might.

And also Might is Right, because the two statements are equivalent one to the other.

But a mere temporary ability like that of Germany to overrun Belgium is not might. It and similar acts, whether of Germany or other Powers, or of individuals, can but end in disaster. There is only one way that either a nation or an individual can be sure in the long run of attaining Might, and that is by doing Right.

And the key to Right is in our natures

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when they have not been cramped and ruined by our education. It is, therefore, at present more evident in that of the poorer classes than in that of the educated, because their education has warped their natures.

THE END

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